



Routledge Studies in Cultures of the Global Cold War

THE CULTURAL COLD WAR AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH

SITES OF CONTEST AND COMMUNITAS

Edited by

Kerry Bystrom, Monica Popescu, and
Katherine Zien



The Cultural Cold War and the Global South

This volume investigates the cultural sites where the global Cold War played out. It brings to view unpredictable encounters that arose as writers, artists, filmmakers, and intellectuals from or aligned with the Third World navigated the ideological and material constraints set by superpowers and emerging regional powers. Often these encounters generated communitas and solidarity, while at times they fed old and new conflicts. Pushing forward recent scholarship that tracks the Cold War in the Global South and draws on postcolonial approaches, our contributors use archival, secondary, and ethnographic sources to trace the afterlives and memories of key figures and to explore meetings that performed cultural diplomacy.

Our focus on sites of encounter or exchange underscores the situated, interpersonal, and embodied dimensions through which much of the cultural Cold War was experienced. While the global conflict divided citizens along ideological fault lines, it also linked people through circulating media—novels, film, posters, journals, and theatre—and multinational conferences that brought artists, intellectuals, and political activists together. Such contacts introduced new axes of solidarity and hierarchies of exclusion. Examining these connections and disjunctures, this new and necessary mapping of the cultural Cold War highlights under-addressed locations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Kerry Bystrom is an Associate Professor of English and Human Rights and Associate Dean of the College at Bard College Berlin, A Liberal Arts University. Previous publications include *Democracy at Home in South Africa: Family Fictions and Transitional Culture* (2016).

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Routledge Studies in Cultures of the Global Cold War

Routledge Studies in Cultures of the Global Cold War aims to invigorate research on the Cold War beyond the US-USSR bipolar framework, to focus on what is now called the Global South—Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. These sites have both been impacted by, and have transformed in turn, the global engagement of the Cold War and its cultural and political discourses. Moreover, the series focuses on cultural production in these regions to understand how ideological battles intertwined with direct violence in the Cold War’s “hot zones.” The series invites monographs and edited collections that historicize and trace genealogies of the conceptual tools and methodologies informing current debates stemming from the Cold War period.

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Introduction: The Cultural Cold War and the Global South: Sites of Contest and Communitas

Kerry Bystrom, Monica Popescu, and Katherine Zien

A battlefield in Guinea Bissau where Portuguese soldiers cluster around a fallen anti-colonial guerilla fighter: this grainy archival photograph forms a striking if partial backdrop to the Colombian-born and South Africa-based photographer Juan Orrantia's complex collage "Liberation" (see Figure 0.1).¹ The success of Amilcar Cabral's PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde) sparked widespread resistance to colonial policies within the Portuguese empire. As a result, Orrantia notes, Guinea Bissau came to be seen as "Portugal's Vietnam."² It led to the 1974 Carnation Revolution as well as the independence of Guinea Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique, though at the cost of many who perished for their ideals. Tying decolonization to an earlier colonial war, Orrantia's right-hand background postcard shows Portuguese Guinea Bissau during World War I. In the middle plane, a red woven Lesotho blanket performs the ethically important act of shielding the fallen fighter from further examination. It also playfully reveals the domestication of entangled histories of violence, the way they were literally woven into everyday life. On top of the blanket, out of a white bowl, pasted-in surreal smoke rises, billowing up and out toward the spectator. The interpretation of the collage is not straightforward: is the smoke invoking a mode of cleansing and healing, or a pastiche reinscription of violence, or something else altogether?

"Liberation" is part of an unfinished project that serves both as a historiographic intervention into the entangled Cold War and anti-colonial wars in Africa and as creative revisioning of the future. We pose it as a lens for this volume and include a more extended section as an Afterword. Of the many questions raised by this layered piece and the project as a whole, perhaps the most central for our purposes is the following: What makes up the field on which the global Cold War played out? Orrantia's work suggests that in the case of physical battlefields, we need to ask where they are and why they have been overlooked, what constitutes them, what lies underneath, behind, or on top of them, shielding them from view. These questions of excavation are equally



Figure 0.1 “Liberation” (2019). Digital collage by Juan Orrantia.

relevant for the domain of cultural struggle as a major front in the global Cold War. The aesthetic of the collage reminds us of the many battles played out on the unstable ground of “culture”—whether through artworks and manifestos, in debates surrounding the links between form and politics, or at meetings and schools designed to disseminate styles of art and life. This is in addition to the hum and bustle of the everyday social world, where postcards circulate, rugs get woven, and domestic rituals are performed.

Engaging this question of how battlefields can be located and excavated, *The Cultural Cold War and the Global South* stages a new investigation of cultural sites where the conflict played out and where forms of contestation as well as “communitas” and solidarity were shaped.³ As we discuss further below, much of the canonical scholarship on the cultural Cold War has framed the contest between the superpowers as paramount, uncovering links of patronage, “soft power,” and coercion through which one superpower or the other sought to influence intellectual discussion and win hearts and minds in Europe or the Third World as well as the struggles facing overdetermined “ambassadors” (Caute 2003; Saunders 2013; von Eschen 2006). Important recent

research (Rubin 2012; Hammond 2006, 2012; Scott-Smith and Lerg 2017) has expanded the cultural Cold War's geographic scope to the Global South, while often still underscoring how the agendas of the superpowers shaped cultural production and trapped writers within unforgiving choices. This volume complements such research by bringing to the center of discussion the idiosyncratic and sometimes unpredictable encounters that arose as writers, artists, filmmakers, and intellectuals—often identifying as inhabitants of the Third World—navigated the ideological and material constraints set out by superpowers and emerging or imagined regional powers, as well the creative, bricolage responses that developed from them.

The focus on sites of encounter or exchange, whether staged in person or created through the circulation and interpretation of texts of various kinds, underscores the situated, interpersonal, and often embodied dimensions through which so much of the cultural Cold War was experienced. As our contributors undertake the important work of using archival and ethnographic records to trace the afterlives and memories of writers, artists, and intellectuals as well as the scenography of meetings and performances, they provide a new mapping of the cultural Cold War. The methodological challenges of accessing often ephemeral sites, from networks of newspaper readers to film festivals and creative writing workshops, further raise two important sub-themes of our volume. These can be framed in terms of questions not only visible in Orrantia's collage "Liberation" but also crucial to the development of postcolonial studies and the largely untapped insights this field offers to Cold War studies.⁴ First, how can such history be accessed? What do we make of the fact that our documentary sources—like the snapshot of the Guinea Bissau battlefield taken by a Portuguese soldier featured in the collage—tend to be from First or Second World points of view? What alternatives can be recovered? How can we both respect and try to fill in some of the massive gaps in the record and the silos created by the dispersion of materials in discontinuous archives? Second, what role can a return to these cultural encounters and events, the archives, and art itself play in helping us find ways to a more just future? As the contemporary world is increasingly undergoing polarizations and divisions that may result in a new "Cold War," can we return to some visions of the past without giving in to "anti-imperialist nostalgia" (Wenzel 2006)?

The following pages of the introduction loop back through these questions to sketch the cultural Cold War in the Global South as a phenomenon bound up with decolonization but not reducible to a replay of prior European imperialisms. We discuss the broader ways in which the Cold War turned "hot" to impact physical security, cultural production, and everyday social life, and further detail some of the conceptual and methodological questions raised by the investigation of the cultural Cold War in the Global South. We finally map the diverse sites of the cultural

Cold War addressed by our contributors before returning to explore their ongoing relevance with reference to Orrantia's Afterword.

The Global South and the Cold War

Historically, many of the figures featured here referred to themselves as members of the “Third World”—a term that carries connotations of resistance movements and sometimes-utopian political projects. By contrast, the terminology of the “Global South” emerged after the Cold War, often primarily in reference to economic conditions. While the Third World's coinage in 1952 was intended to carry positive valences, the “Global South” was initially framed somewhat pejoratively, in terms of economic disadvantage, until being reclaimed as an alternative to globalization.⁵ Although neither “Third World” nor “Global South” offers an optimal way to encapsulate the unevenness of wealth and power within and between nation-state territories, we and our contributors employ these shorthands respectively to refer to the Third World political projects of the Cold War era, as well as to the current demarcations of the places that hosted these projects.

The Cold War has been conceived conventionally as a global political and military contest between the US and USSR from roughly 1947 to 1989/1991, in which culture played a prominent (if often distorted or overdetermined) role.⁶ Unlike World War I or World War II, where specific battlefields are memorialized as the sites where mass bloodshed took place, the Cold War is often represented as being siteless—unsited, diffuse, and as the name wrongly suggests, a war without physical battles—given that the US and USSR were not engaged in direct combat. While the superpowers and their allies did not engage in a direct military confrontation, they ramped up their military preparedness; the arms race and the ensuing nuclear threat impacted all countries.⁷ A global perspective on the Cold War of course debunks the idea of a “cold” conflict. The absence of direct military engagement between the superpowers dissimulated the existence of proxy conflicts, dirty wars, and so-called “low-intensity conflict zones” located in the Global South (Glejeses 2002, 2013; McMahon 2013; Westad 2005). Africa, Asia, and Latin America were the scene of intense “hot” wars (Shubin 2008). To point out a few of the most visible examples, in the Vietnam War, which engulfed Laos and Cambodia as well, the battle ostensibly fought between the communist North Vietnam and the pro-Western South Vietnam was actually pitched between China, the USSR, and other communist allies, on the one hand, and the US and its allies South Korea, the Philippines, Australia, and Thailand, on the other. It spanned two decades, led to millions of combatant and civilian deaths and infrastructural destruction. Africa in the process of decolonization was host to multiple “proxy wars” from the 1960s to the 1990s, which “devastated nations such as

Angola, Mozambique, and the Congo” due in part to Western and USSR support for “unscrupulous leaders” (Plastow 2012, 113). As Katherine Zien mentions elsewhere, “these conflicts killed and displaced millions. The Horn of Africa (comprising Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti) was an especially active site of Cold War neo-imperialism” (Zien 2020, 388).

This global Cold War overlapped and was intermeshed with a cluster of distinct but interrelated ideas and projects that proliferated from early decolonization to the late 1980s and continue to inspire movements and identifications around the world. These political projects—flanks of the Third World, one might say—include: the 1955 Bandung Conference (and its reverberations, which Christopher Lee and Vijay Prashad term the “Spirit of Bandung”); the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM); and Tricontinentalism (Lee 2019, 15; Prashad 2007, 45). From the 1950s to the 1990s, these movements influenced individuals and groups who saw themselves outside of, or in opposition to, the pro-capitalist and white supremacist West, even if their countries had instituted political, legal, and economic linkages to the US. Other governments, such as military dictatorships in Latin America, deployed cultural diplomacy to distance themselves from Soviet or Chinese socialism and gain access to the club of “Western, Christian civilization.” (Carmody, this volume, 304)

The formation of coalitions that both encompassed and transcended the nation was an implicit balancing act. If the Bandung Conference debuted an Afro-Asian alliance that decolonization empowered, Tricontinentalism extended the “Bandung spirit” to Latin America via the pivot-point of Revolutionary Cuba. The Tricontinental movement began in Cuba in 1966 but also transcended the Cuban nation-state, fostering a “community of feeling” that bolstered political subjects organized around transnational and transracial resistance to Western imperialism, white supremacy, and capitalism (Mahler 2018, 10). As with Bandung, at times this “spirit” touched down at gatherings, while at other moments it remained diaphanous and disembodied.

Each of the above moments, and the movements that they spawned, is distinct from and sometimes in conflict with the others. Nevertheless, they became strategic devices and resources for people to formulate ideological and affective orientations that opposed Western imperialism and capitalist exploitation (but not necessarily capitalism itself) or Stalinism. Such orientations linked people through circulating media—film, posters, journals, and theater—and air transportation, which brought artists, intellectuals, and political activists and leaders into contact at multinational conferences. The transmission of photographs and films of oppressed peoples around the world stimulated empathy for the plight of those facing imperialism, racism, and class exploitation in far-flung regions and across linguistic divides. Such a global sensibility introduced

new axes of solidarity, cosmopolitanism, and affinity, connecting people and nations alike through media, sentiment, and sometimes direct contact. Thus, for example, radical filmmakers in Argentina echoed Che Guevara's call to foment "muchos Vietnams"; Cubans supported African American civil rights activists and Angolan anticolonial leaders; and Panamanians protested South African apartheid. More than an affective force, this sensibility embraced knowledge production of commonalities among disparate groups, transmitted in the hopes that the combination of fact and feeling might breed new coalitions to fight global injustice.

Culture: Conflict and Communitas

In addition to its "hot" zones, the global Cold War featured culture as a battlefield: a dimension of struggle that did not replace physical combat but was waged in conjunction with the actual violence. Scholars have long pointed to the concept of a cultural Cold War as the supplementary ground where the superpowers could showcase their achievements and advance their ideological goals, building support for specific visions of modernization, development, justice, and freedom (Balme and Szymanski-Düll 2017; Caute 2003; Lazarus 2011; von Eschen 2006; Westad 2005). The global conflict suffused daily life in the Eastern Bloc and the West, as attested by cultural output (television programming, films, entries for competitions and festivals, a preference for specific genres and modes of cultural production), hardening gender roles, and the development of a specific imaginary characterized by mistrust and paranoia (Caute 2003; Piette 2009; Douglas 1998). Visual spectacles, sonic landscapes, and embodied scenes choreographed around Cold War imperatives shaped what Fred Turner (2013) calls in the case of the US "the democratic surround." There were also much more targeted cultural fronts. Francis Stonor Saunders (2013) for instance brought to the foreground the machinations of the US CIA and its support for the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), and hence its promotion of certain modes of anti-communist writing and visual art and its push for the "freedom" of formal innovation (modernism, Abstract Expressionism, and even postmodernism) over a dogmatic Socialist realism linked to the Left (Barnhisel 2015). There has been a rich vein of new material on the topic of the CCF specifically (Scott-Smith and Lerg 2017; Rubin 2012; Kalliney 2015; Holt 2019; Franke et al. 2021). More recent research has further defined culture as the crux of the conflict, discussing the way in which Soviet programs intersected with American ones in the Global South (Brouillette 2015; Djagalov 2020; Popescu 2020a).

It has become clear that many of these cultural processes, which scholars initially identified only in the West, also permeated creative and political activities in the Global South, either in alignment with one of the

superpowers or in search of nonaligned, alternative spaces and modes of expression. Yet they could have different implications for those in what was known as the Third World. As Claudia Calirman documents in her study of Brazilian artist Cildo Meireles, the stakes differed greatly in contexts where “you know of at least one friend who is being tortured” or “you may fear that you will be shot at, either in the universities, in your bed, or more formally in Indochina” (Calirman 2012, 126).⁸ In these situations of violence, being an artist was more than the act of “get[ting] up in the morning, walk[ing] into a room, and apply[ing] dabs of paints from a little tube to a square canvas” (2012, 126). Art had to be “relevant and meaningful” in different ways (2012, 126). In short, lives were on the line.

Analyzing these convergences and differences, recent publications, as well as this volume, are interested in how Third World states took up the strategies of cultural diplomacy wielded by the superpowers to join or shape alternative local, global, and regional orders as well as in the conceptual tools deployed by Third World artists in claiming culture as resistance terrain. Given how recently decolonized nations and those subscribing to “Third World” platforms were often seen by the superpowers as material, ideological, and affective testing grounds for the impacts of the Cold War contest, cultural events and objects were often spaces where political, economic, and even military conflicts and alliances were borne out in representationally and aesthetically mediated ways. Yet cultural sites and forms also transcended and escaped the superpowers’ and host countries’ geopolitical aims. As many of the chapters in this volume show, producers and audiences of the many cultural events that transpired during the global Cold War—from traveling musical and performing ambassadors to literary conferences and film festivals—interacted in new and transformative ways, beyond the rigid and narrow political aims of the states that sponsored them.⁹ Objects like novels, posters, and many other cultural artefacts that circulated during the global Cold War also proved volatile, enacting distinct meanings as they transited. These percolating encounters utilized capillary action to move ideas and networks into unpredictable locales that were at once personal, aesthetic, social, and political.

The essays in our volume frame conferences, gatherings, performances, and objects of print culture circulating within networks of reception as unstable spaces of encounter where diverse genres, disciplines, peoples, and socioeconomic strata confronted each other, articulating distinct worldviews. They underscore how there was rarely “one-way transmission” of superpower models at the level of culture. Hegemonic models of modernization, and aesthetic movements such as abstract expressionism, high modernism, and Socialist realism, did have real influence in shaping matters of “taste” and aspiration. Yet even states or intellectuals and artists who seemed to be clearly siding with US or Soviet (or Chinese) imperial interests also contextualized and sometimes subverted them (Djagalov 2020;

Kalliney 2015; Popescu 2020b). Artists did not copy but deformed and reformed top-down attempts to influence, making them their own. Meetings for certain “official” purposes could have unintended effects, as Southern thinkers and artists sought to reappropriate spaces and concepts offered by the superpowers (and proxies) on their own terms. Culture, in other words, was at once being fought through and fought for, and these struggles generated various kinds of communities and *communitas*.

Christopher J. Lee considers how cultural events have the ability to sow long-range outcomes that, nonetheless, have idiosyncratic trajectories (2019, xvi). As he and Anne Garland Mahler note, Tricontinentalism and Bandung both enacted “*communitas*” (Lee 2019, 25–26; Mahler 2018, 10). *Communitas* as a concept is deceptive: while it may initially bring a feeling of utopian borderlessness, a kind of leveling togetherness that upends hierarchies and repositions bodies in novel relationships, it also occurs, according to Victor Turner’s foundational view of social drama, as one phase in a cycle of many, to be succeeded by a reformulation of the norm. Therefore, Lee, following Fanon and others, acknowledges its limitations—among them its “transitory, liminal” status and its frequent exercise as a prelude to the reclamation of social stability. In other words, *communitas* may be as seductive as it is anti-revolutionary (Lee 2019, 26). Yet the time of connection of people and ideas and the aftermath in which bodies go on to enact projects based on their erratic, liberatory, utopian encounters have to be considered as an important aspect of *communitas*. They matter. Here it is worth underscoring how cultural events and the circulation and reception of objects proved temporal and affective sites, capturing a sense of futurity especially in the early moments of decolonization.¹⁰ They offered a sense of possibility or euphoria in the post-independence period. While this sense of *communitas* was not destined to endure, recapturing aspects of openings and potentialities may ultimately become as meaningful, and monumental, as the long march toward neoliberalism.

Sites and Archives: Methodological and Conceptual Approaches to the Global Cold War

The concept of “sites” has a different meaning in the Cold War from the global conflicts that preceded it. This difference, in turn, shapes the way that we research and remember the Cold War. We have already noted that the Global Cold War tends to be seen as “siteless” rather than located in specific battlegrounds. If the “Battle of the Bulge” or “Vimy Ridge” are memorialized in Western societies, the site of the 1978 Cassinga massacre, in which the South African Defence Force bombed and killed hundreds of Namibian refugees in Angola, most of them civilians, is barely marked by two cement slabs, as Jo Ractliffe’s moving photographs reminds us (Ractliffe 2010).¹¹ The concrete battlefields of

former conflagrations that were later transformed into sites of memorialization, what we might call Cold War “lieux de mémoire”—to follow Pierre Nora’s (1989) formulation—were mostly non-traditional sites (embodied experiences, performances, events taking place across the globe, as well as archival repositories oftentimes located in the First and the Second Worlds). Thus, a global perspective on the Cold War necessitates an engagement not only with a larger array of locales but also a richer definition of sites of contest.

This volume redirects the narrative away from the political interests of the superpowers and a mere representation of loss—of life, economic power, and possible independent futures—suffered by countries subjected to new forms of imperialism. This project of redirection poses many methodological challenges. One challenge that ensues from the hierarchized geopolitical Cold War landscape is that of simultaneously presenting countries from the Global South as targets of overlapping forms of imperialism while also going beyond a reductive representation of victimization. Furthermore, states’ responses to superpower imperialism distilled in official policies could (and did) also lead to internal forms of oppression. A complex political and ideological landscape arose, which individual artists and the cultural organizations that they joined or avoided had to navigate. For instance, revolutionary Cuba worked to stave off US imperialism in the Caribbean yet during the 1962 missile crisis was caught up in the show of force between the US and the USSR and the ensuing threat of nuclear armageddon. To assert itself as a regional power and a purveyor of internationalism, Cuba sent troops to Angola to support the MPLA (People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola) government; this deployment demonstrates that the Cold War was a conflict that spanned the globe and that a simplified bipolar approach, prioritizing the superpowers, failed to explain. More importantly for the goals of this volume, the socialist Caribbean state developed cultural and political solidarity programs, such as the Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America (OSPAAAL), that allowed it to tap into Third World alliances as well as to present itself as an alternative center of internationalist action. Nonetheless, like other anti-imperialist projects, the otherwise inspiring Cuban endeavor comprised sinister internal effects, through the maintenance of racial hierarchies, censorship, imprisonment of political and sexual dissidents, and a crackdown on individual freedoms. Cuba was not alone in having this “inside/outside” dynamic: many Third World nations performed transnational solidarities on the world stage while suppressing domestic populations. It is important for new research, like that represented here, to create an appropriately dense texture of intended and unintended results of the struggle for independence and the difficult choices faced by cultural programs and individual artists alike.

Methodologically, our contributors draw on approaches to previous conflicts, by reading the archives generated by the superpowers and their close allies against the grain. They also borrow from the toolkit of memory studies scholars in fields where material traces are scant or were erased (Trouillot 1995). Our work entails both following traditional avenues in postcolonial studies, by tracing vertical oppressive relations and opposition to forms of imperialism, as well as more recent, lateral approaches to solidarity within the Global South (Bystrom and Slaughter 2018; Hofmeyr 2010; Popescu, Tolliver, and Tolliver 2014; West-Pavlov 2018). We see the Cold War as a confrontation between two imperial forces—the US and the USSR—with their allies and satellites, each displaying within its configuration a center, peripheries, and semi-peripheries (Worsley 1980, 301–302; Popescu 2020b, 73). We acknowledge forms of stratification and domination among the formerly colonized, taking our cue from scholars like Antoinette Burton that claims of fraternity could actually entail “brown over black” hierarchizing (Burton 2012), and as well as sinister, opportunistic, or cynical forms of collaboration (Osinubi 2014). Cindy Ewing, for example, argues that “postcolonial elites participated in a practice of gatekeeping to cope with the constraints of international diplomatic practice while advancing a more limited form of anticolonialism” (Ewing 2020).

The repositories on which our contributors draw are inevitably overdetermined by Cold War imperialisms. These archives are dispersed and sometimes fatally compartmentalized in disciplinary silos (Shringarpure 2019, 98–102, 192). Some repositories are ephemeral and fragmentary in nature: the contrast between the carefully archived CCF documents and the scattered and non-digitized Afro-Asian Writers Association (AAWA) materials is an illuminating illustration. Further, as mentioned earlier, knowledge is often embodied rather than existing as an external material trace of the Cold War, belonging to what Diana Taylor has delineated as the repertoire rather than the archive (Taylor 2003). Our contributors in general both acknowledge and work with these fragmentary conditions, oftentimes tracing individual works’ and artists’ trajectories in and out of expected repositories, creating a richer and more textured image of what it meant to be a cultural producer from the Global South during the Cold War.

The emphasis on Cold War archives and their limitations is not a novel concern. In the 1980s, when the nuclear threat remained ever-present despite the two rounds of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, Jacques Derrida laid out the stakes of the particular stage of the Cold War which could lead to total annihilation and the destruction of the “juridico-literary archive” (1984, 26). While intense technological specialization seemed to rule out the participation of the artists and humanities scholars in the superpowers’ decision-making, Derrida creatively arrayed “seven missives” acting as seven conceptual missiles, to suggest that the humanities were particularly

equipped to weigh in. As the nuclear apocalypse had not happened and remains “fabulously textual” (Derrida 1984, 23), artists and scholars could speculatively lay out the outcomes and solutions.

Derrida’s intervention exemplifies possibilities for intellectuals and artists to play crucial roles in the conflict. Whether considering the Cold War to have concluded in 1989/1991 or to extend its impact into the present (Kwon 2010, 4–5), cultural approaches to the global conflict, such as the ones provided in this volume, remain crucial to understanding and navigating it. Creative cultural approaches, such as Orrantia’s “Liberation,” thereby offer palliation for the destruction of material traces and subsequent difficulty with memorializing events, the preservation of archives in forms and locations inevitably tainted by bias, and the perpetuation of scholarly narratives skewed toward the superpowers and their closest allies.

Mapping the Sites: Literary Meetings, Art and Film Festivals, Print Culture Circuits, and Political Performances

The chapters that compose this volume are organized to shed light on how events, objects, and circulations associated with different branches of “culture” served as sites of contest and *communitas*. Conferences and festivals emerged at the center of this analysis—distilling important dynamics of superpower and regional power posturing, absorption and deflection, and the building of alternative solidarities and lines of conflict. As Lanie Millar notes in this volume, “artistic and political conferences throughout the twentieth century served as important spaces where leading intellectuals could encounter and debate new ideas and currents of thought, but also [...] these conferences could fundamentally shift artists’ and thinkers’ ideologies, politics, and aesthetics both individually and collectively” [45–46]. Accordingly, we begin by tracking conferences and festivals and mapping some of the pre- and post-histories (including schools and networks) associated with literature and cultural theory, on the one hand, and visual art and cinema on the other. After that, we explore the way newspapers, journals, and literary texts were produced and the way their circulation and interpretation created sites of contest and *communitas*. Finally, we look at performances outside the sites already investigated, to see how artistic and political staging serve as battlegrounds and archives. Within each section, we follow a roughly chronological order, tracing logics as they unfold across historical time.

The first section of essays explores literary and cultural festivals and meetings. From the PEN Club to the Latin American “Boom,” many international literary communities emerged during the Cold War period, both funded by the superpowers and independent of these. Indeed, there is a sizable body of scholarship on Cold War literary-political

intersections, but with some exceptions this scholarship is only beginning to address literary terrain beyond the superpowers.¹² Our analysis of the spaces of exchange created through literary networks begins with an early and often overlooked literary festival in India important in shaping notions of Third World writing and testing out the postcolonial regional power balance in Asia. Convened shortly after Bandung and seen as a cultural follow-up of sorts, the Asian Writers Conference (AWC) was held in Delhi in 1956 to recover and renew supposedly ancient Pan-Asian dialogues and traditions of cultural exchange. Yan Jia's article "**Cultural Bandung or Writerly Cold War? Revisiting the 1956 Asian Writers' Conference from an India-China Perspective**" provides an incisive bifocal analysis of this meeting. Looking at official printed materials, speeches, and personal diaries, it unpacks both Indian and Chinese agendas, showing how their cultural policies were intertwined with changing domestic and regional political visions. It also reveals how these agendas filtered into and out of exchanges between individual writers, which could take surprisingly open forms.

The exploration of individual experiences of conferences and festivals vis-à-vis state logics of power and display continues in the next two chapters, which treat the 1968 Cultural Festival of Havana (CCH). Lanie Millar introduces personal encounters (between individuals, as well as between individuals and ideas) that took place at the CCH as sites for reshaping anticolonial ideologies that would circulate far beyond Latin America. Her contribution, "**Mário Pinto de Andrade, the Cultural Congress of Havana, and the Role of Culture in the Global South,**" tracks how interactions and presentations at the CCH influenced the arc of development of the important Angolan intellectual and poet's thinking on Negritude, culture, and liberation. Through Andrade, some of the main ideas and commitments tested out at the CCH came to reverberate across the South Atlantic in Lusophone Africa.

Anne Garland Mahler takes a different approach to the influence of the CCH and its circulation in South-South exchanges, in this case into the wider Caribbean, via a close analysis of descriptions of the conference by a Jamaican writer. "**The Limits of Global Solidarity: Reading the 1968 Cultural Congress of Havana through Andrew Salkey's *Havana Journal***" posits Salkey's text as an example of "Cold War radical travel writing" which not only shows how international solidarity movements were constructed but also reveals cracks and tensions underlying events like the CCH, notably its elision of the black Cuban experience. Mahler asks us to face how "internationalism in the cultural arena could be used to further exclusionary domestic politics" [this volume].

Amanda T. Perry's chapter "**Sovereign Alliances: Reading the Romance Between Cuba and the Anglophone Caribbean in the 1970s**" furthers the discussion of the impacts of the Cuban Revolution in the Caribbean. She shows how Anglophone Caribbean governments and

Cuba, overlooking key racial dynamics and questions of socialist internationalism, sought closer cultural links within a shared pro-sovereignty and anti-imperial framework meant to contest US influence and intervention. The political alliance briefly flowered through intellectual correspondence and at events like the Carifesta Caribbean Cultural Festival held in Havana in 1979, but ultimately lost traction when the US invaded Grenada in 1983. Perry's reconstruction of a diplomatic "romance" underscores the pervasive influence of the superpowers to roll back alternative communities; yet is also excavates cultural links which carried into the future.

The final chapter in this section explores a cultural institution designed to encourage literary encounters across the First, Second, and Third worlds. Szabolcs László's *We Understand Each Other?: Writers from Eastern Europe and the Global South at the International Writing Program (1970s)* shows how many of the dynamics of cultural festivals—such as the constant imposition of and search for ways around official state agendas, the unpredictability of encounter, and the importance of personal exchanges—repeat in other forms of convocation, such as the famous gathering of writers in Iowa. The inclusion of this educational sphere is key, as training was an important means of transmitting ideologies, skills, and styles during the Cold War, with courses and fellowships acting as sustained spaces of interaction and exchange and therefore political pressure, resistance, deflection, and creative rearrangement.¹³ After framing the University of Iowa's International Writing Program as a site for the extension of US soft power, the chapter explores relationships between Eastern European and African participants, which often subverted host expectations.

In order to underscore the power of visual languages in Cold War cultural networks and dynamics, the volume shifts to cinema and visual culture. At film and visual art festivals, national delegations interacted ambivalently with the superpowers, as individual artists followed diverse trajectories toward solidarity and meaning-making. Cinematic, graphic, and still images circulated actively across global terrain, with film in particular becoming a key forum for shaping transnational conceptions of what resistance should look like and how it should be waged—most famously perhaps in the case of Argentine Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's conception of "Third Cinema" which equated the camera with the rifle and defined filmmaking as a guerilla activity (Solanas, Getino, and Martin 1997 [1969], 49). The section opens with an analysis of the "forgotten Afro-Asian prehistory" of such resistance cinema, based on archival material newly excavated by Elena Razlogova. Razlogova's careful analysis in "*Cinema in the Spirit of Bandung: The Afro-Asian Film Festival, 1958–1964*" pieces together the individual encounters and transnational tensions of the First Afro-Asian Film Festival in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in 1958. Razlogova links this festival to the "Spirit of

Bandung,” convened just three years earlier, and shows how Bandung politics and Soviet patronage oriented the event toward the creation of popular, national cinemas that could compete with the developing Western European art cinema model. Yet Razlogova also traces the Chinese delegation’s and individual filmmakers’ discontent with this approach. Their push for more militant approaches would come to anchor the “rebooted” First Tashkent Festival for Asian and African Cinema in 1968 and find an echo in wider Third Cinema practice.

From this chapter, we turn to two engagements with the First World Festival of Negro Arts, held in Dakar, Senegal in 1966—a major initiative that brought over 30 nations to the newly independent African country to showcase art from Africa and the diaspora, to display national images, and to fight for soft power and cultural influence. Joseph Underwood gives three takes on the festival in “**From Dakar to Diaspora: The Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres as Nexus and Network.**” First, he recounts the visual art exhibition *Trends and Confrontations* to underscore how it shaped a canon of black contemporary art in later festivals and exhibitions. Second, he uses the official Soviet documentary film covering the festival, *African Rhythms* (1966), to decode Soviet aspirations to court newly independent African leaders. Finally, his analysis of the official US Information Agency film *The First World Festival of Negro Arts* (1966), directed by African American William Greaves, demonstrates how a director tried to reconcile the political demand to downplay racial injustice in the US with African American calls for freedom.

Gesine Drews-Sylla examines in more detail the question of Soviet images of and relations with Senegal. Treating the documentary *In Senegal* (1961) in addition to the film *Rhythms of Africa*, her chapter “**B Сенегале (In Senegal) and Ритмы Африки (Rhythms of Africa): Soviet Documentaries on Senegal during the Cold War**” indexes changes in Soviet approaches to Africa during the 1960s. Drews-Sylla shows how the first film, created during a moment of flux after independence, envisions a Soviet bloc-aligned cultural pathway that was intended to forge a possible diplomatic alliance. *Rhythms of Africa*, by contrast, presents a way forward envisioned after the Soviet Thaw, relying on intellectual and affective links and more flexibility of style.

Julie-Françoise Tolliver’s chapter “**Ousmane Sembène’s Borom Sarret and the Circulation of ‘Tractor Art’: A Cold War Contestation of Soviet Machine Iconography**” in some sense offers a response to the Soviet imaginaries of solidarity seen in the documentaries Drews-Sylla analyzes. She presents a close reading of the USSR-trained filmmaker and novelist’s short film *Borom Sarret* (1963), comparing it with two precursor Soviet films to lay bare the limits of the latter’s polarized ideology of modernization and progress. Sembène’s film in fact highlights the ill-fit of both Soviet communism and Western capitalism as models for the newly

independent Senegal. Here the residues of French colonialism and entrenched notions of “tradition” thwart universal visions of liberation and progress coming from either side of the superpower contest.

The last chapter in this section considers the afterlives of networks made in schools, workshops, and festivals. It also brings us from Cold War history into the present. Jessica Stites Mor’s “**Networks of South-South Solidarity and Cold War Argentine Filmmaking**” traces how exiled Argentine directors found sympathetic alliances in other countries during the Cold War (both with regard to human rights abuses and as part of the Third Cinema movement) and probes what happened to these alliances after the end of the Argentine dictatorship and the Cold War itself. Transnational links played a key role in drawing attention to Argentina in the 1980s, Stites Mor argues, but they may also have laid the foundation for an industry where filmmakers would have a difficult time pursuing truly radical ends in the 1990s and beyond, given tricky questions of representation and a failure to challenge neoliberal production practices.

The volume’s third section shifts from in-person encounters to the “imagined communities” (Anderson 1983) and visions of worlds created through and mediated by printed texts, from newspapers to journals to specific novels. Since Benedict Anderson’s classic *Imagined Communities*, newspapers, novels, and other examples of print culture have been recognized as important venues for shaping senses of community at a distance. While Anderson focuses on the construction of the nation, this kind of publication also convenes other types of communities, linking together readers on global, regional, transnational, and subnational axes (Slaughter and Bystrom 2018, 8–9). Alongside these networks are potential encounters encapsulated in the “messages in a bottle” that all authors cast out—ideas and archives of experience created for bodies of readers somewhere out there or in the future. These connections among people reading pages are of course in addition to the dialogues and exchanges staged within the pages themselves. They index debates about ideology and style central to the cultural Cold War. For this reason, we should see artefacts of print culture not only as important archives of the process of the Cold War but also as sites where alternative solidarities and connections could be shaped and disseminated.

Vikrant Dadawala’s “**War, Famine, and Newsprint: The Making of Soviet India, 1942–1945**” helps us push the beginning of the Cold War back in time to examine its roots in the disruptions of colonial rule created during World War II. Achieving wide circulation in the “flash of possibility” (Wilder 2015) between late colonialism and the onset of the Cold War, the Indian newspaper *People’s War* served as a technology knitting together dispersed activists into a coherent (if imagined) community of Communist internationalist Indians. Looking at both the visual and narrative dimensions of the newspaper, Dadawala traces how,

in the years leading up to decolonization, the newspaper conjured up the image of and desire for a Soviet India. This version of India did not ultimately come to fruition, but Dadawala argues that it did influence the future politics of the country by determining how intellectuals positioned themselves at the dawn of the Cold War.

Like newspapers, journals played a key role in creating and consolidating communities of ideological and aesthetic affiliation, and for the exercise of soft power by or on behalf of different Cold War players and ideas (Scott-Smith and Lerg 2017; Djagalov 2020; Popescu 2020b). They also created space for intellectuals to work through some of the complications of the unfolding political and intellectual field, as Emily Foister shows in her chapter “**The Vatican Bargain: *Solidarity* and the Futures of the Philippine Cold War.**” Looking at the 1966 inaugural issue of the Philippine journal *Solidarity*, this chapter explores the possibility of “exorcising” imperial influence in the wake of decolonization and Bandung. Editor F. Sionil José’s *Solidarity* was a CCF-funded magazine and in some sense belongs squarely on the side of US propaganda efforts. Foister’s close reading of different contributions to the journal issue does reveal how deeply colonial and US ideologies penetrated the circles of Filipino intellectual elites, but also shows how they were complicated in localized visions of nationalism, modernization, and development.

Cho-kiu Li’s chapter also deals with how seemingly pro-US intellectuals—in this case novelists—navigated the demands of the early Cold War. “**Asia’s Refugee City: Hong Kong in the Cold War**” addresses novels written by refugees from Communist China and Vietnam in a Hong Kong where British, American, and Chinese cultural politics “neutralize” each other—or at least coexist in modified or tamped-down forms—in order to create a mutually beneficial political and financial stability. The focus on Hong Kong as a Cold War borderland moves us into important terrain in thinking beyond binaries, posing the city itself as a site of contest. Moreover, Li examines how literature written by and about refugees such as Tzu-Fan Chao’s well-known *Semi-Lower Society* (1955) reveals the complexity of seemingly propagandistic or one-dimensional (US-sponsored) literary activities in the city.

The last two chapters of this section show how African writers examined and pushed back against the pre-packaged political, aesthetic, and ideological scripts. Eleni Coundouriotis’s essay “**Freedom and Development in the Cultural Cold War**” critically interrogates the top-down promises for progress and liberation held out by the US and the United Nations through a close reading of the work of a South African novelist Bessie Head. Reflecting on her life in a rural community in Botswana after her exile from apartheid South Africa, Head offers a vision of development which radically rejects colonial and apartheid dehumanization and is firmly rooted in local conditions rather than the

external ideologies of either capitalism or communism. Coundouriotis perceptively characterizes this model's not as a linear progression but as a branching out that mimics the indigenous thorn bush so prominent in Head's writing and environment, and offers it as a vision that deserves renewed consideration.

In "Raindrop on Dusty Ground: Nuruddin Farah, Somalia, and the Cold War," Bhakti Shringarpure tracks Somalian novelist Nuruddin Farah's attempts to maneuver through the partisan intellectual, political, and aesthetic "ping pong" of the Cold War, as well as to create a near contemporary historical archive of its effects on Somalia and on Somali people. Looking specifically at his *Variations on an African Dictatorship* trilogy (*Sweet and Sour Milk* [1979], *Sardines* [1981], and *Close Sesame* [1983]), written while Somalia was a client state of the Soviet Union (before it switched sides to the US), Shringarpure argues that Farah's historical novels provide an X-ray image of ambivalent Somali reactions to the Cold War. They document the totalitarian atmosphere and its fragmenting effects on families and individuals, yet also reveal the complex textures of debate and the opportunities for movement, critical thought, and judgment enabled by Cold War networks. Excerpts from Shringarpure's interview with Farah provide insight into how authors perceived and responded to the demands on their writing during the Cold War period.

The final section of the volume attends to live performance. Performance, as a conduit of *communitas*, played a critical role in the formation of resistant global sensibilities. Artists, intellectuals, and political and economic leaders in the emergent Third World staged—in theater, folklore, highly theatrical diplomatic events, and other performative modes—displays of nationalism that were simultaneously local-facing and in dialogue with transnational movements. Music and dance have been sites of keen interest in studies of cultural diplomacy in the Cold War.¹⁴ Concerts and tours were crucial sites in which soft power was peddled and authority contested. Citing a song popularized by Louis Armstrong, Penny von Eschen (2006) insightfully asks who are the "real ambassadors," the government officials or the artists on tour? And what could be made of the slippage between these two power-brokering entities? This section explores and thinks beyond official tours. It expands the frame to include political and military ceremonies at the heart of national public relations strategies as well as individual theater pieces that reflect on and archive the impacts of the Cold War's many proxy wars on bodies and psyches.

Louise Bethlehem, Anton Lahaie, and Samuel Barnai take us to the world of dance in their excavation and close reading of a Soviet ballet adaptation of a best-selling South African novel. "Choreographing Ideology: On the Ballet Adaptation of Peter Abrahams' *The Path of Thunder* in the Soviet Union" reveals that works conceived in one context both resonate and become distorted, or reconfigured, as they shift into new locations of

reception and ideology. This ballet, performed multiple times from 1958 onwards, responded to Soviet interest in decolonization struggles and specifically the oppression facing black South Africans. The adaptation process however ended up reworking important details for specifically Soviet ends; for instance, restaging and “ideologically intensifying” key moments to shift labor and not race to the center, and blurring South African and US forms of racial oppression in the score (not to mention utilizing blackface). The resulting spectacle said more about Soviet imaginaries than South African realities.

Michelle Carmody’s “**It’s Like Inviting Pinochet to the Fourth of July: The Chilean Ship *Esmeralda* and Intersecting Spectacles in the Global Cold War**” explores a series of responses to right-wing Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet’s cultural diplomacy initiatives in the 1970s. Hoping to rehabilitate images of Chile in the wake of the 1973 coup against Salvador Allende and consolidate its position in the modern capitalist club, Pinochet organized international tours for the historical naval ship *Esmeralda* beginning in 1974. Carmody pits the spectacle Pinochet attempted to stage against resistant counter-spectacles mobilized in ports along the west coast of the United States and Canada, where the ship was refused landing in protest against Pinochet’s human rights abuses. Meanwhile, the ship was included in an “apolitical” 1977 East Coast regatta celebrating the US Bicentennial. Such interactions showed how easily political spectacles can be reinterpreted, testifying to the ability of diverse audiences to deflect and restage messaging.

Brenda Werth’s chapter “**Reenacting Bodily Archives of the Cold War in Lola Arias’s *Minefield***” concludes this section by pointing to embodied memories and experiences. As it brings together onstage former combatants from opposing sides of the 1982 Falklands/Malvinas War between the UK and Argentina, *Minefield*, Werth argues, reveals the experience and the violence embedded in the bodies of former soldiers as key sites of evidence, akin to forensic archives that opened up possibilities for victims of Argentina’s Cold War dictatorships to achieve justice. Turning to these memories via documentary theater may help respond to individual experience productively, allowing individuals and groups to work through the traumas of the past, along with identifying a new range of sites from which to approach Cold War history.

Conclusion: What Was Not Destroyed but Does Not (Yet) Exist

Taken together, the chapters trace how the Cold War played out on the terrain of culture in and about the Global South. They address the modes and logics through which soft power was deployed “from above,” the texts and events through which favor was carried, and the stumbling blocks of colonialism, racism, and inequity that prevented easy

transposition of value systems into these “Third World” states and territories-in-becoming. Moreover, the chapters shed light on how the Third World entered into the terrain of cultural diplomacy, engaging with various configurations of the regional and the global, and mobilizing ideas, images, narratives, and performance to construct new kinds of solidarities, albeit often limited by the fractures of race, class, and gender. At the center is how individual artists experienced cultural exchanges, grappled with cultural and ideological influences, and navigated in their work and lives the uneasy relation between superpower conflict and their home terrains. As the contributors show, many artists sought out something different, often a better, more just definition of the terms and projects bandied about by superpowers, like development, modernization, liberation, or freedom.

Many chapters probe the questions of where new information about this history can be found, and what we do with the archives and legacies of the cultural Cold War—its violence and trauma, but also hope and unexpected connection—in a world dividing again in new and dangerous ways. These questions take us back to Orrantia’s collage “Liberation” and the wider work-in-progress from which it is drawn, which Orrantia reflects on in a poetic vein in the Afterword to this volume. The smoking object in the very center and front layer of “Liberation” brings to mind the word “alchemy”—the transmutation of one substance into another, the seemingly magical effort to alter matter. Indeed, Orrantia’s collage is alchemical in its alteration of distinct periods of colonial combat in Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, and Lesotho into a new entity: the subjective and relational interplay of form with affect in the artist’s journey through multiple archives. Yet in this case, the magic comes from artistic creation itself. In our interview with him, Orrantia observed that the images which make up the piece would never have been placed together in an archive—indeed, they are distinct in temporality, discipline, and meaning—and he ruptures the classificatory schemas to recombine them, to induce a sense of semiotic play, of irony, of recursion, and of the aesthetics of war (both liberation and clash), which belong to our shared global past, present, and future. “For me,” he notes, “it’s about these relations that just kind of [fit] together, but they’re never going to be together in an archive because archives are too classified by disciplines ... and by places, or by specifics about, you know, this is about World War I, or this is about the anticolonial war ... for me, it’s much more about the feelings and moments of liberation and [...] clash that have happened and that happen and that in a way continue to happen.”¹⁵

Orrantia’s Afterword also speaks to a similar project of transformation or poesis on a larger scale. Here, the artist reflects on an evolving body of work fundamentally concerned with how elements of African independence and Cold War anti-colonial solidarities often lost from view might be retrieved from accumulated layers of history and altered

or recombined through artistic intervention to imagine futures of fuller solidarity and freedom. He meditates in fragmentary prose on what it means to live in and through the ruins of both empire and the Cold War (in something akin to Stoler's [2013Stoler 2013] and Shringarpure's [2019Shringarpure 2019] sense of "debris" and "ruins"), as well as along tracks laid about by anti-colonial and internationalist struggle that (in words Orrantia brings to us from Maputo) "was not destroyed, but also does not exist." Building from an earlier photographic series that that poses Chris Marker's 1986 film *Sans Soleil* as a jumping-off point for exploring the legacy of Amilcar Cabral in Guinea Bissau, but engaging more fully with Marker's filmic technique of montage, the digitally manipulated images included in the selection suture together archival and original images from disparate sources to imagine "the past's future" differently.¹⁶

In this work-in-progress, history is not imagined away: visions of white colonial modernity offered by postcards of Mozambican airlines (at that point a Portuguese equivalent to Pan Am) and classification cards indexing racial and geographical hierarchies jostle with Amilcar Cabral's (1969) theories of the importance of culture in revolution and now-closed film institutes set up to both protest colonialism and build a revolutionary visual culture. But a new positioning or assemblage, a cobbling together of found and created elements, may reveal both the structures and choices that led independence to fail and the counterfactual paths to utopian horizons waiting to be acted upon (see also Wenzel 2006). It may reveal, in other words, "the possibility of creating something new" (Orrantia this volume, pp.). It seems only appropriate to end with an example of the ongoing way culture remains a site for processing the global Cold War, reviving and configuring for a new moment the efforts of artists, writers, and intellectuals revealed within these pages.

Notes

- 1 The authors would like to thank Eleni Coundouriotis and Pallavi Rastogi for their helpful comments on draft versions of this introduction, as well as Juan Orrantia for his generosity in sharing his on-going work.
- 2 Personal interview between Kerry Bystrom and Juan Orrantia, April 20, 2020. The description of the Orrantia's work here and in the final section of the introduction draws on this conversation.
- 3 Our understanding of *communitas* is indebted to Christopher J. Lee's adaptation of Victor Turner's anthropological concept: the transitory feeling of community experienced by political and ideological groups from the Third World allowed them to imagine utopian alternatives to the Cold War geopolitical structures dominated by the superpowers (2013, 25–26).
- 4 For connections between Cold War and postcolonial studies see Djagalov 2020; Kwon 2010; Popescu 2020; Shringarpure 2019.
- 5 As Nour Dados and Raewyn Connell note in their brief article on the Global South, the language of "North" and "South" "provided an alternative to the

concept of ‘globalization,’ contesting the belief in a growing homogenization of cultures and societies” (Dados and Connell 2012, 12). But Marcin Wojciech Solarz adds that the “essence” of the North-South divide is economic development, or its lack, while the Third World has a more ideological bent as an unfinished political project. Whereas the Global South concept emerged after the Cold War, the Third World (tiers monde) concept held sway for many decades after being coined by Left French intellectual Alfred Sauvy in 1952. The Third World, with echoes of the “Third Estate,” indicated a kind of “global proletariat” that was “other, different, independent, and sovereign” and demanded “freedom, equality, and brotherhood” (Solarz 2012, 1565). For other scholarship on defining the Third World and the Global South see Dirlik 2004, 2007; López 2007; Mahler 2018; Prashad 2007; West-Pavlov 2018.

- 6 Scholars have challenged every aspect of this characterization, from the timeline to the geographic scope, to the characterization of the political and cultural players. See for example Westad 2005; Kwon 2010; McMahon 2013.
- 7 Indeed, it is difficult to overestimate the extent to which the “Cold War” itself has been a discourse shaped by an imperialist drive. As Ann Douglas reminds us “the term ‘cold war’ [...] has a point of view, and its authorship is precisely known. Largely a US term, it was used to designate, if not initiate, the struggle the foreign policy elite saw between the so-called free world of capitalism headed by the US and the closed-market regimes of international communism represented by the Soviet Union and its satellites, as each superpower struggled to best the other in the nuclear arms race and carve out impregnable spheres of influence and power for itself” (1998, 74–75).
- 8 For a discussion of the roles of artists during the global Cold War, especially the polarization between political dissidence and commitment to social transformation, see Popescu 2020, especially Chapter 1, “Pens and Guns: Literary Autonomy, Artistic Commitment, and Secret Sponsorships.”
- 9 For previous scholarship on this topic see von Eschen 2006; Canning 2015; Djalalov 2020; Fosler-Lussier 2015; Mahler, 2018; Popescu in Hammond 2020; Tolliver 2019.
- 10 For the temporalities created by the intersection between decolonization and Cold War, see also Scott 2014 and Shringarpure 2019.
- 11 For a discussion of Cold War traces on urban landscapes in the Global South see Bystrom 2018; Popescu 2020.
- 12 For exceptions see Bystrom 2017; Djalalov 2020; Franco 2002; Holt 2017; Kalliney 2015; Popescu 2020; Rubin 2012; Shringarpure 2019; Zien 2017.
- 13 For the role of educational programs offered by the USSR, see Katsakioris 2017; Litvin 2018.
- 14 While the work of Penny von Eschen (2006) explores jazz ambassadors, Danielle Fosler-Lussier (2015) looks specifically at the activities of traveling musicians in US State Department’s Cultural Presentations program. Clare Croft (2015) examines dance diplomacy, and Charlotte Canning (2015) unpacks traveling theater-makers during the Cold War. Finally, Balme and Szymanski-Düll (2017) treat theater in the context of the global Cold War, showing theatrical performance to be a major site of superpower funding but a radically under-addressed area in theater studies.
- 15 Personal interview between Kerry Bystrom and Juan Orrantia, April 20, 2020.
- 16 See Orrantia, “Why would ...” <http://www.juanorrantia.com/why-would>. For a discussion of “the past’s future” and “anti-colonial nostalgia,” see Wenzel (2006).

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Part I

**Literary and Cultural
Conferences and Meetings**



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1 Cultural Bandung or Writerly Cold War? Revisiting the 1956 Asian Writers' Conference from an India-China Perspective

Yan Jia

Introduction

The first Asian Writers' Conference (AWC) took place in Delhi on December 23–28, 1956. Attended by nearly 275 delegates from 17 Asian countries, 150 or more from India alone, for the first time in modern history the AWC brought together Asian writers in face-to-face exchanges.¹ The sheer fact that such a transnational cultural event organized by Asians for Asians could take place in the capital of an independent Asian country cannot be overemphasized.

The Delhi AWC took place a year and a half after the Bandung Conference (April 1955). Despite the difference in geographical scale, the AWC was closely related to Bandung both at the practical and conceptual levels. It can be viewed as a unique occasion that simultaneously featured “nostalgia *for* Bandung” and “nostalgia *at* Bandung,” to use Duncan Yoon’s (2018) terms.

On the one hand, inspired by and nostalgic for the “feeling of political possibility” (Lee 2010, 15) presented through Bandung’s solidarity-building project, the AWC’s organizers and participants aimed at re-enacting this “feeling” through cultural approaches. According to Mulk Raj Anand—noted Indian English writer and the AWC’s general secretary—the idea of organizing the conference was essentially his response to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru’s call in Bandung to reinforce inter-Asian cultural exchange. At the AWC, writers constantly referred to the political principles of “Panchsheel” (the Sanskrit term for “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence”), a key outcome of the Bandung Conference, as applicable to developing relations among Asian writers. Anand, for example, suggested in his address that participants should accept a kind of “Panch Shila [*sic*] in cultural matters”: “That is to say we may accept a variety of ways of living, thinking, and feeling, while at the same time we agree to coexist without any attempt to exert pressure on each other” (Cohen 1956).

On the other hand, the AWC was permeated by the same kind of “nostalgia” present at the Bandung Conference, that is a more or less

“idealistic invocation” of the linkages between participating countries in the precolonial period (Yoon 2018, 26). At Bandung, a subcommittee on culture was held, which emphasized the civilizational greatness and spiritual foundations shared by Afro-Asian cultures as well as the imperative to renew old connections between these cultures (Yoon 2018, 27–30). The AWC gave fuller and deeper expressions for these emphases by dedicating much of its agenda to reassessing the ancient traditions of different parts of Asia, rediscovering their cultural linkages, and re-examining how these linkages had been severed by Western imperialism.² The idea was to present “Asia” as an age-old space of cultural contact that could and should be revived in the modern world.

The Indian host was particularly captivated by this nostalgia for past splendor because it helped reimagine India’s central status in the cultural life of Asia. As Anand persuaded Nehru, the AWC could offer a long-awaited forum for Asian intellectuals, who “had not met for more than a thousand years, after the last Buddhist Conference in the sixth century A.D. under Harsha” (Anand 1993, 183).³ Although Anand does not detail what specifically made Nehru accept the proposal to organize the AWC in Delhi, it is clear that the conference fit well into Nehru’s plan to represent India as a “core state” in Asian and African countries, and himself as a “region-builder,” a plan that had been in practice since the 1947 Asian Relations Conference (Singh 2011).

Held as symbolic of a “resurgent Asia,” the Delhi AWC was imbued with high hopes of contributing to the region’s cultural decolonization and self-determination. To this end, the conference statement highlighted three modes of cooperation—“the acquisition of knowledge of one another’s country,” “mutual cultural exchange,” and “exchange of information” (Cohen 1956, 11), which derived directly from the recommendations made by Bandung’s subcommittee on culture (Yoon 2018, 29). However, despite its pronounced genealogical links with Bandung, the AWC did not project “Asia” in terms of political re-configuration. The gist of the writers’ solidarity the AWC set out to establish was the renewal and reproduction of cultural exchanges and mutual understanding, rather than a political alliance based on anti-colonialism or any other ideological formation.

Looking beyond the official rhetoric, this chapter intends to offer a more historically grounded and critically engaged understanding of the 1956 Delhi AWC by focusing on how the conference actually unfolded and what it in fact meant to Asian writers of different nationalities, political stances, and literary outlooks. Drawing on underexplored materials ranging from public archives to private accounts, this chapter shows that far from a cultural application of the “Panchsheel” utopia, the Delhi AWC was in fact a “site of contest” influenced quite significantly by Cold War tensions. This manifested not only as conflict along political lines but also as competition between modernist and

socialist realist aesthetic systems promoted respectively by the United States and the Soviet Union.

This study of the 1956 AWC enriches the growing scholarship about post-war Third World writers' movement, which have tended to present the 1958 Tashkent Afro-Asian Writers' Conference (AAWC) as the movement's decisive start (Djagalov 2011; Halim 2012; Yoon 2014; Yoon 2015), by bringing into focus a key early conference. Examining the Delhi AWC not only reveals India's crucial role in initiating the format of the post-war Third World writers' conference but also re-constructs the genealogy of the Afro-Asian writers' movement before its formal institutionalization into the permanent bureau (established immediately after the Tashkent conference) and its split in the 1960s due to the breakup of Sino-Soviet relations.

Methodologically, this chapter investigates the AWC from what I call an "India-China perspective," which compares the two delegations' engagement with the event and also considers the contacts—dialogues *and* debates—between them. I have chosen India and China not only because they can generate a fuller picture of the AWC by holding together a host angle and a guest one, but also because, more generally, they represent two different methods of engaging with Third Worldist cultural projects in the Cold War period. Comparing the different ways in which Chinese and Indian writers, as well as Indian writers of various kinds, participated in the AWC shows that although Third World literary solidarity was established with supra-nationality as its defining feature, this solidarity was in fact destabilized by vastly differing national and subnational situations, such as political structure, cultural climate, and foreign policy. Such a perspective, which is at once transnational, national, and subnational, activates a more nuanced approach to study the cultural Cold War in the Global South.

Cold War Politics at Play

Unlike the Bandung Conference, in which state leaders took the initiative, the AWC was essentially a non-official event organized by and for writers. Nehru's involvement in the AWC was limited and mostly symbolic: he received the international members of the preparatory committee and showed up at the closing ceremony but did not play an explicit role in drafting the conference agenda, selecting Indian delegates or choosing the conveners. With this limited state intervention, the organizers of the AWC and some of the noted figures who lent endorsement hoped to keep the conference at a distance from political issues and Cold War politics in particular. For Anand, as he told a Chinese cultural delegation that visited India in early 1956, India was an "appropriate" place to hold the first AWC precisely because of its "neutral position" in the current world divided by the Cold War (Yan 1956, 42). However, a

careful survey of the declarations and debates emerging from the Delhi AWC shows that the cultural Cold War significantly influenced the AWC not so much in the form of direct interference from the two superpowers,⁴ but rather as competing political-cultural value systems embodied by the Asian writers themselves.

Cold War politics can be found to be working on three different levels in the AWC. First of all, it impacted the selection and representation of Indian delegates. While the AWC enabled the first national-level gathering of Indian writers after Independence, it also mapped the divisions of India's literary field onto an international scene. In addition to linguistic division caused by India's multilingualism, the ideological division was particularly strong in the 1950s. The pro-Soviet, pro-China Progressive Writers' Association (PWA) and the pro-U.S., anti-communist Indian Congress for Cultural Freedom (ICCF) operated simultaneously at the two ends of the country's ideological spectrum.⁵ Instead of being handpicked by a particular institution, Indian delegates to the AWC were selected by a temporarily formed steering committee comprising noted literary figures from divergent schools of thought, with the view to guaranteeing the widest representation of Indian writers. Included in the committee were progressive authors like Anand and Sajjad Zaheer (card-carrying communist), as well as anti-communist writers. The anti-communists included those affiliated with the ruling Congress Party,⁶ such as Banarsidas Chaturvedi and Ramdhari Singh "Dinkar," and writers associated with the ICCF, such as Sachchidananda Hirananda Vatsyayan "Agyeya" and Prabhakar Padhye.

What complicated the AWC most was the challenge anti-communist writers and progressive/communist Indian writers frequently presented to one another. Three days before the conference five Indian members of the committee—Dinkar, Jainendra, Agyeya, Padhye, and Krishnalal Shridharani—issued a joint statement, expressing their misgivings: "the conference is inspired and controlled by persons of a particular political persuasion" ("Renewed Split" 1956, 9). The statement was clearly directed at the communist presence at the conference. In response, Anand repeatedly insisted that "red domination" was impossible because "there were only two communist writers among the Indian delegates," and he was not to be blamed if communist countries sent communist writers ("Renewed Split" 1956, 9). Agyeya and Padhye may have criticized the communists too strongly, leading the ICCF journal *Quest* to comment that "they played a useful role inasmuch as they kept the conference politically neutral, but their anger and interruptions had a strictly limited, functional urgency" (Anant 1957, 45). A counterattack took place at the Indian Writers' Convention organized on the eve of the AWC, where progressive Hindi and Urdu writers associated with the PWA like Ali Sardar Jafri, Bhairav Prasad Gupta, and Surendra Balupuri contended that the steering committee should be disqualified from selecting

Indian delegates because the committee itself “was not a representative body of the writers” (“Settlement Reached” 1956, 9). Balupuri and Amrit Rai even insisted that Agyeya be excluded from the committee. In addition, progressive writers scrapped a proposed list of Hindi delegates because they alleged that the proposed candidates “were more representative of the Indian Council for Cultural Freedom than of Hindi literature” (Cohen 1956).

The second aspect of the AWC that was permeated with Cold War politics concerned the invitation of delegates from communist countries, and China in particular. The above-mentioned statement about “red domination” was very likely triggered by the selection of Chinese delegates. The five signatories to the statement suggested that five writers including Lin Yutang, who wrote in Chinese language but lived outside mainland China, should be invited to the conference. The proposal, however, was objected to by the Chinese representatives on the secretariat, and Anand and Zaheer, the two leftist Indian members on the secretariat, may have seconded this objection. Ideological division aside, this controversy effectively reveals the gap between “Chinese literature” as formulated by the PRC’s cultural authorities and that imagined by Indian writers, especially the liberals. It is understandable that Lin Yutang, who had been twice nominated for the Nobel Prize in literature (1940; 1950), may have been much more well-known in India than some of the PRC’s mainstream authors writing about land reform. However, he was labeled a “reactionary comprador bourgeois writer” under Maoist cultural ideology and his name was politically taboo. The Indian proposal had challenged the PRC’s officially sanctioned version of Chinese literature from which the entire category that would be later known as “Sinophone” was excluded.

Finally, Cold War cultural politics found expression at the AWC in the panel discussion, and the most controversial topic was “the freedom of the writer.” It is unknown whether this topic, which highlighted “freedom”—the keyword of America’s Cold War global propaganda to counter the Soviet-promulgated term “peace,” was inserted into the conference agenda by ICCF members, but ICCF-associated participants engaged with it with a particular enthusiasm. Reflecting on this subject in his speech, C. Rajagopalachari, chief minister of Madras and a senior ICCF member, said: “We should not imagine writers should be asked to dole out any regimented ideas. We become slaves if ideas are circulated according to order” (Desai 1957, 243–244). He considered India a country where “nobody controls writing” and asked Indian writers to sympathize with writers of other countries who had less freedom to write. Given Rajagopalachari’s well-known anti-communist stance, his speech was clearly a partisan declaration targeting writers from communist countries, which was in line with the widespread anti-communist discourse that customarily equated communist culture with state imposition.

The AWC panel discussion on the relationship between freedom and the writer shows that Asian writers of different nationalities and political outlooks within the same national boundaries (e.g. India) wittingly or unwittingly positioned themselves within the cultural Cold War by accepting one of the two competing aesthetic systems: the modernist system promoted by the United States, which foregrounded individualism and artistic autonomy, or the Soviet system of socialist realism that emphasized literature's relationship with the people and its purposefulness.⁷ When delegates tried to define what freedom meant to a writer, differing views emerged. The Chinese delegate Ye Junjian recorded one such debate between the modernist Gangadhar Gadgil, who initiated the *Navakatha* (New Story) movement in Marathi literature, and the communist Urdu poet Ali Sardar Jafri:

A professor named Gadgil presented an abstruse paper that ran about 5,000–6,000 words. He pulled various things into his presentation, which ranged from the psychology of art and aesthetics to the claim that “communist countries do not have real freedom and art.” His paper used obscure terminology, but its content was readily understandable. Its thesis was that “the characteristic of an artistic work is its spontaneity,” and it is not a reflection of the objective environment but rather “an organism emerging from the writer’s consciousness.” The writer arranges (unconsciously) this spontaneously “emergent” organism and makes it into a work of art. Writing is the realization of such arrangement, and that is why a writer gains a sense of pleasure in writing. This sense of pleasure is completely autonomous and irrelevant to any moral or social value, [...] and, therefore, a work of art has no moral or social purpose. Art itself is the purpose. This is the real art; every other type of art is fake. The freedom a writer needs is the freedom to create “real art.”

This statement was refuted by many writers. The Indian author Jafri said frankly that such abstract theory of writing was beyond his understanding. He further pointed out that, like this professor, he had no choice but to speak a foreign language [English], because the language of his own nation had not developed freely in the past two centuries or more. If we don't have the freedom to develop our own languages, how can we speak of writing for pleasure? If the sole purpose of a work is aesthetic pleasure instead of moral or social value, why is this professor reading his paper out? By no means can the audience share his pleasure in writing this paper. What then is the purpose of presenting this paper? Since it has been read out, it naturally has the purpose of influencing the audience. In this sense, it is no longer concerned only with “pleasure,” but moves into the domain of “social value.”

(Ye 2010, 206)⁸

Although Ye did not explicitly outline his stance (or that of the Chinese delegation) in this debate, it is clear that he supported Jafri's view, given that in the mid-1950s China socialist realism was the dominant literary framework, whilst modernism was largely off-limits. We also get a sense of Ye's dissent from his tone in presenting Gadgil's argument—note his frequent use of inverted commas, a sign of suspicion, and his emphasis on Gadgil's obscure language, excessively long paper, ostensibly profound idea, and the overt attack on communist countries for lacking “real art.” Ye also mentions the ICCF-affiliated Prabhakar Padhye, who seconded Gadgil's “art for pleasure's sake” theory by using the case of the Taj Mahal to argue that “all works of art serve the people” because they provide pleasure and enjoyment to them. Clearly a response to the socialist realist critique of modernism for its “divorce of art from the people,” Padhye's argument, as Ye recounts, was challenged by Anand, who did not consider the Taj Mahal a pleasure-inducing piece of art because it was essentially “a monument of death” built “at the cost of substantial human and financial resources” (Ye 2010 206). By invoking the polemics of Jafri, Anand, and other progressive writers, Ye emphasizes the socialist realist meaning of “art for people's sake” and the limited and purposeful nature of a writer's freedom.

China's Engagement in the AWC

Despite the misgivings some non-communist Indian writers expressed about the participation of China, and their critique of communism as a whole, the Chinese delegation nevertheless actively engaged in the AWC. In addition to providing the Indian organizers with financial aid, China also endowed the AWC with a large amount of symbolic capital by sending a delegation comprising 11 leading Chinese authors. Unlike the Indian delegates, who were selected by a non-official committee, the Chinese delegates were appointed by the Chinese Writers' Association (CWA), a “people's organization” closely supervised by the government. The Chinese delegation mainly consisted of author-turned cultural bureaucrats, such as Mao Dun (minister of culture and head of the Chinese delegation) and Zhou Yang (vice-president of the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China). Although most of the delegates were communists, the delegation also included a few non-communist writers, such as Lao She, the renowned novelist of Manchu ethnicity and vice-chairman of the CWA. The inclusion of writers like Lao She, who had become part of the new regime's “united front of writers,” signaled the PRC's open cultural, political, and ethnic policy to an international audience.

Like the Bandung Conference, the AWC offered China a valuable platform that the new regime could use to expand its international networks beyond the socialist camp. The active engagement of the

Chinese delegation in the AWC embodied China's aspiration to build its image not only as a dedicated player but also as a potential leader in Third World affairs. Using the breaks between and after conference sessions, the Chinese delegation turned the AWC into a busy platform for bi- and multi-lateral cultural diplomacy: they wined and dined delegates from at least four countries—Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma, and India—in order to enhance friendships; the cultural attaché of the Chinese embassy also held a reception for all delegates, as well as other prominent literary and cultural personalities in Delhi. Through these proactive moves outside the conference hall, the Chinese established a role that was close to that of the host.

While playing a collaborative role in Delhi, the Chinese delegates were aware of the conflicts within the Indian delegation and the pervasive anti-communist sentiment in the AWC. In fact, they commented on these antagonistic moments in their private writings, which, unpublished at the time, in retrospect help us recreate a more nuanced picture of China-India writerly contact at the AWC by making visible the undercurrent of tension beneath the collaboration.

According to Ye Shengtao's diary, as soon as the Chinese delegation arrived in Delhi, the Chinese ambassador informed them of the "disunity" among the three Indian conveners and the different writer groups they represented: Mulk Raj Anand, who enthusiastically participated in China-oriented cultural diplomacy and the Soviet-driven World Peace movement in the 1950s, was labeled a "progressive"; Jainendra Kumar, an accomplished Hindi author renowned for his psychological novel, was considered a representative of "centrist" Indian writers who had apprehensions about the participation of socialist countries; Banarsidas Chaturvedi, correspondent, Hindi writer, Gandhian, and Congressman, was among the anti-communist "bad ones" (*elie zhe*) who attempted to "make trouble" (Ye 1994, 170). In one passage, Ye writes:

At lunchtime, our delegation entertained our Indian friends who organized the Asian Writers' Conference. Four came, including Anand and Kumar. Both of them have visited our country several times. Anand writes in English and Kumar in Hindi. A Gandhian, Kumar is a simply-dressed vegetarian. (1994, 178)

Ye's diary shows that in the eyes of the Chinese delegates, Indian writers were constantly subject to ideological inspection, demarcation, and grouping. Their political tendencies and past experiences of visiting China further determined their proximity to the Chinese people: Anand and Jainendra were considered "friends," whereas Chaturvedi, the rightist "bad one," is not.

The observations and comments in Ye Shengtao's diary, however, did not find expression in the public sphere. In a short report Ye wrote for

Renmin Ribao (People's Daily), the official newspaper of the communist party, he discussed the conference with great optimism as a significant opportunity for Asian writers to "make friends through literature" (*yi wen hui you*). He briefly mentions the divergent views held by writers but stresses the spirit of "seeking commonality while preserving difference" (*cun qi yi er qiu qi tong*) instead of overtly criticizing the rightist Indian delegates. This contrast between Ye's private and public presentation suggests that the Chinese delegation at the AWC did not adopt a hardline approach that prioritized political principles over cultural factors.

The relatively open attitude of the Chinese delegates in Delhi, as Adhira Mangalagiri (2017) points out, partly resulted from the relaxation of the PRC's cultural climate due to the ongoing "Hundred Flowers Campaign" that lasted from mid-1956 to mid-1957. Launched by Mao Zedong and underpinned by the slogan "Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend," this campaign encouraged writers and artists to create freely and openly express their views on the communist regime. The Delhi AWC held in December 1956 coincided with the heyday of that campaign. The loosening of domestic political restrictions, therefore, seems to have influenced the way in which Chinese writers participated in the AWC and engaged with their own literary matters.

At the conference, Mao Dun delivered a speech entitled "Zhongguo Wenxue Xianzhuang" (The Present State of Chinese Literature). After outlining the evolution of Chinese literature in the first half of the twentieth century and the main literary developments under communist rule (e.g. the diversification of subject matter and the increased translation of foreign works), Mao Dun's speech ended with a self-critique that resonated with the "Hundred Flowers Campaign":

Generally speaking, the current condition of our literature is unsatisfactory. Although we have produced many works, these works are thematically limited and stylistically homogenous. Most of them are either about warfare or agricultural and industrial construction. The other aspects of people's lives have rarely been depicted in our literary works. There are a lot of works that lack originality, novel artistic conception or an elegant language style. In terms of literary criticism, our attention has often gone to the content and theme of a work, rather than analyzing its artistry. All of these shortcomings are related to the dogmatic tendency in our critical theory and creative method.

(Mao 1996, 522)

Mao Dun's self-reflective evaluation of Chinese literature, which called for a turn from dogmatism to inclusiveness and from an overemphasis on content to the balanced treatment of content and form, found fuller and

more vocal expression in Lao She's speech at the panel discussion on writerly freedom. Reflecting on the relationship between literature and politics, Lao She said:

Every literary work can definitely become a weapon of political propaganda, but it should be "real" literature that has power and impact. Literature is subject to its own laws. No one is prepared to read a work that claims to be literature but in fact has nothing but political jargon.

(Lao 1957, 253)

In the context of the AWC and the larger cultural Cold War, this declaration can be read as a response to the attack modernists usually directed at communists for subordinating the literary to the political. Echoing the spirit of the "Hundred Flowers Campaign," Lao She further called the authority of socialist realism into question and invoked a more eclectic literary environment that would allow all forms of works to flourish, as long as they reflect "people's lives":

It is acknowledged that socialist realism is the progressive form of writing, but does this mean all other creative styles are worthless? My answer is negative. All the works that mirror people's lives enrich our treasure trove. This can help our literature thrive. In addition, we should encourage every writer to form their own style, instead of discouraging them from doing so. We should let our literary works flourish in various shapes, not cast them into one narrow mold. We should encourage different schools to coexist in our literary field. In so doing, every writer will get inspired and set out to write, no matter what their political affiliations are, which "school" they follow, whether they are scholars of classical literature or bold authors belonging to a new generation.

(Lao 1957, 254–255)

By highlighting intrinsic literary value ("power and impact") as the prerequisite for fulfilling a work's political potential, and presenting socialist realism as one of many possible literary styles, Lao She's speech at the AWC offered a nuanced theory that dismantled the antithesis between the doctrine of "art for people's sake" and that of "art for art's sake." The ways in which Mao Dun and Lao She presented Chinese literature contrasted starkly with the approach the Chinese delegation adopted at the 1958 Tashkent AAWC, one that expounded Chinese literature strictly in terms of the socialist realist doctrine and Mao's literary theory (Vanhove 2018, 146–151; Yoon 2015, 241–245).

It is worth noting that Lao She's speech received a great deal of attention from the Indian media. Not only did both communist and non-communist

news reports on the AWC cite this speech in excerpts (Cohen 1956; Desai 1957), but its full script, which is not even available in the Chinese language, was published in Hindi translation in the progressive literary journal *Nayā Path* (New Road). It is unknown why Lao She's speech was never published or mentioned in the Chinese reports of the AWC. Adhira Mangalagiri (2017) argues that even under the circumstances of the "Hundred Flowers Campaign," Lao She's ideas may have been too bold to publish.

To Know, to Feel, and to Learn: A Site of South-South Literary Exchanges

Partly because the Chinese delegation did not adopt a politically unyielding attitude, the ideological difference between Chinese delegates and some liberal Indian writers at the AWC did not turn into open confrontation. This allowed their contact to focus more on literary subjects and, indeed, fostered an effective exchange of information, ideas, and experiences.

In addition to panel discussions, almost throughout the six-day conference, writers reported on the state of literature in their own country. This deepened their understanding of one another's literary traditions and their recent developments. The Chinese delegates, for instance, were particularly impressed with the multilingual literary culture of India, and at one event they listened to presentations made by Indian writers who represented 14 different regional languages. Such a concentrated yet comprehensive display of "Indian literature" as a federation of letters rarely occurred in bilateral cultural visits, in which writers only traveled to a few regions and literature was seldom the focal point of exchange. Ye Junjian's report shows how the conference made Asian writers aware of their ignorance of each other's literature and corrected their conceptions of one another:

At this conference, over 20 reports were presented on the literatures of different Indian languages. We hadn't even heard of some of their names, such as Oriya literature, Orissa [*sic*] literature, Sindhi literature, Marathi literature, Rajasthani literature, Gujarati literature, Malayalam literature, Telugu literature, Dogri literature and Kannada literature. All of them have a longstanding tradition and rich heritage, which are still developing, but none of us has ever studied them. Even the literatures of the regions geographically close to us, such as Kashmir and Assam, have rarely come to our notice. The most interesting report is the one about Sanskrit literature in modern times. It is generally held that Sanskrit is a dead language like Greek and Latin, but in fact people still use it today to write and even to translate Shakespeare's plays.

(Ye 2010, 197–198)⁹

The significance of the AWC also meant learning about the self through the other. For example, it was only through the presentation of Indian regional literatures that the Chinese delegates learnt for the first time that Chinese literature had influenced modern Kashmiri literature, and that the works of Lu Xun (alongside those of Gorky and Tolstoy) had inspired the modern short story in Assamese (Ye 2010, 198). Exchanges like these not only increased Chinese writers' knowledge of the overseas reception of their own literature but also helped present an image of "resurgent Asia," where some contact had already taken place in recent times and left a mark.

If the conference hall, where the addresses, presentations, and panel discussions took place, mainly served as a formal site of exchange of information, the spaces outside offered subtler, more informal, and more aesthetically-driven mediums of contact, which allowed writers to not only know but also *feel*. Attending a large poetry recitation in Jullundur, Punjab, with over 2,000 people in the audience, Chinese poet Han Beiping, who represented China on the preparatory committee of the AWC, was impressed by the zeal and connoisseurship of the audience (mostly ordinary citizens, not professional poets) in enjoying poetry, particularly how they reacted to different poems with varying exclamations, facial expressions, and bodily gestures.¹⁰ Without understanding the Punjabi language, Han could tell that "each poem has its own meter and tune," which sounded similar to Chinese folk songs and *ci*, a form of classical Chinese poetry (Han 1957, 116).

For Han and other poets of socialist China, being part of the poetry recitation—an opportunity for literary immersion of a kind that infrequently appeared in the schedule of bilateral cultural visits—opened a window to perceptual knowledge of how literary practices were actually carried out in India, in addition to the knowledge they acquired through formal conference participation. Having learnt that public involvement in poetry recitation is a longstanding tradition in India, Han turned this experience into an introspective process by relating it to his own tradition and suggesting that reforms be applied to China's poetic life:

I have gained some inspiration from attending these recitals. Poets should meet their readers more often and recite the poems to them. This is beneficial to both social and artistic activities. We should befriend readers, because their face-to-face feedback is the quickest and best way to appraise our own works. Moreover, the recitations we have organized so far paid too little attention to traditional and folk elements. If we don't limit the scope of recitation to new poetry and "spoken language" [*shuobai*], not only will our poems reflect social reality more acutely but the group of reciters will also expand to include folk singers and artists. In so doing, the content of our recitations will surely become richer and the audience larger.

(Han 1957, 117)

Han's observation links to the question of the relationship between writer and audience and, more fundamentally, between literature and the people. The new Chinese literary culture he envisions needs the participation of the people not only as readers but also as evaluators and interlocutors. In this way, the interaction between the literati and audience would simultaneously cultivate the public and improve the writers' artistic creations.

Proposed between 1956 and 1957, Han's suggestions for reforming Chinese poetry were in tune with the spirit of the "Hundred Flowers Campaign," which welcomed unconventional ideas, constructive critique, and the introduction of new forms and practices. At the same time, these suggestions foreshadowed the "New Folksong Movement" launched by Mao Zedong in March 1958, which similarly emphasized the role of folksong and orality in revitalizing Chinese poetry and the involvement of "the masses" in poetry production. This similarity indicates a continuity between the literary orientation of the "Hundred Flowers" period and that of 1958, an abruptly more hardline period marked by the "Anti-Rightist Movement" and the "Great Leap Forward." Han's observations at the AWC also suggest the potential of Indian literature to inspire Chinese writers and reform the Chinese literary field.

Conclusions

Launched to usher in a "Resurgent Asia" through literary and cultural exchanges, the 1956 Delhi Asian Writers' Conference built ties while also revealing chasms, exemplifying the ambiguity of Third Worldist cultural projects. On the one hand, the AWC was not simply the "cultural Bandung," as envisaged by Anand and other writers, because the conference was significantly inflected by Cold War politics, which mainly transpired in the shape of pre-conference partisan struggles between progressive and rightist Indian writers and competing literary values within the panel discussions. On the other hand, it would be equally reductionist to call the AWC a "writerly Cold War," because it indeed created a previously unseen space where literary figures from Asia discussed, exchanged, and reflected on specific literary issues. The Cold War politics underlying the AWC did not turn China-India writerly contact into overt political conflict, partly because the Indian organizers maintained the conference's cultural focus through a series of procedural arrangements, such as limiting the topics of presentations and panel discussions to cultural issues and keeping voting and passing of resolutions to a minimum (Cohen 1956), and partly because the Chinese delegates engaged with a politically moderate and culturally open attitude. This relatively relaxed atmosphere enabled a fruitful exchange of knowledge of each other's literary tradition and development.

Less than two years after the Delhi AWC, the first Afro-Asian Writers' Conference (AAWC) was held in Tashkent. Originally intended to be the "second AWC," the Tashkent AAWC incorporated Africa primarily due to the influence of the Soviet-sponsored Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization (AAPSO), which met in Cairo from December 1957 to January 1958.¹¹ At the Tashkent AAWC, the competitiveness and tension of writerly contact, which already existed in Delhi, became intensified. While ideological difference persisted, competing national interests as manifested in different ways of self-positioning in Cold War geopolitics became a prominent factor that sharpened the division between the Chinese and Indian delegations and divided the Indian delegation itself (Shridharani 1959). Without a careful examination of the Delhi AWC and the Indian host's investment in it, it would be difficult to gain a deep understanding of the tensions at the Tashkent AAWC and particularly the counter-intuitive decisions made by some Indian participants, such as their protest against including "anticolonialism" as a topic of the conference agenda.¹²

The various forms of the contest at the Delhi AWC anticipated the dramatic division of the Afro-Asian writers' movement into the Soviet-sponsored permanent bureau and the Chinese-sponsored Afro-Asian Writers' Bureau (AAWB) in the 1960s, following the Sino-Soviet split. The AWC, which took place during the heyday of China-India fraternity, also suggests that conspicuous fissures were already present in China-India literary relations before bilateral political conflicts became explicit in early 1959. However, highlighting the ideological and literary fault lines of the AWC does not suggest the project of Third World literary solidarity destined to failure from the start. Rather, it helps deconstruct discursive categories such as "Afro-Asian Solidarity" and "Pan-Asianism/Africanism" that tend to simplify this substantially complex and difficult project into romantic configurations.

Notes

- 1 Participating countries include Burma, Ceylon, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, North Korea, Malaya, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Syria, the Soviet Asian Republics, North Vietnam, and South Vietnam.
- 2 Writers participated in discussions of four specified topics: (1) the traditions of Asia; (2) the freedom of the writer; (3) the writer and his trade; and (4) cultural exchange.
- 3 This Buddhist conference held by Harsha in fact took place in the seventh century (642 A.D.), in which the Chinese monk Xuanzang participated.
- 4 The only American writer invited to the conference was Edith (Edita) Morris, a Swedish-American pacifist author who opposed nuclear weapons and the Cold War. No evidence suggests that the participating Soviet writers, either formal delegates from the Soviet Asian Republics or observers from the European Soviet Union, engaged in posing a particular ideology at the conference.

- 5 While the ICCF was funded by the U.S. as part of the transnational Congress for Cultural Freedom initiative, the PWA was basically a local organization of leftist/communist Indian writers, which did not receive funding from China.
- 6 The Congress Party's relations with the Communist Party of India soured due to the latter's ultra-left radicalism and anti-Congress stance at the turn of the 1950s.
- 7 For a discussion about how the United States established modernism as its cultural weapon in opposition to socialist realism, see Barnhisel (2015), Chapter 1.
- 8 All translations of Chinese and Hindi texts included in this chapter are mine.
- 9 Note the erroneous juxtaposition of Oriya literature with "Orissa literature" (Orissa is a state in India whose official language is Oriya), which to some extent is proof of this ignorance.
- 10 Following the AWC, Han stayed close with the Afro-Asian writers' movement, representing China. For a close reading of Han's poem included in the Afro-Asian poetry anthologies published in the 1960s, see Yoon (2012).
- 11 For a detailed analysis of the relationship between the AAWC and the AAPSO, see Yoon (2014).
- 12 See Jia (2019), Chapter 2, for a careful study of the Tashkent AAWC in relation to the Delhi AWC.

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2 Mário Pinto de Andrade, the Cultural Congress of Havana, and the Role of Culture in the Global South

Lanie Millar

The Angolan theorist, critic, and politician Mário Pinto de Andrade (1928–1990) was one of Lusophone Africa’s foremost intellectuals of the twentieth century. Both his editorial work and his extensive writing evidence a deep engagement with Africa’s relationship to international racial and cultural politics of the mid-twentieth century: Andrade was an editor of the seminal journal of black culture *Présence Africaine* between 1951 and 1958, as well as the co-editor of the poetry notebook *Poesia Negra de Expressão Portuguesa* (Black Poetry of Portuguese Expression; 1953) and a number of influential anthologies including *Antologia da Poesia Negra de Expressão Portuguesa* (Anthology of Black Poetry of Portuguese Expression; 1958), and *La Poésie africaine d'expression portugaise* (African Poetry of Portuguese Expression; 1969). From the 1960s forward, Andrade published widely in French and Portuguese about the intellectual origins and urgent necessity of national independence for colonized peoples. A foundational member of Angola’s leftist MPLA party who fell out with its leadership, Andrade went into exile before Angola’s independence in 1975 but continued to write extensively about Angolan political and cultural histories.¹ His theoretical works about Lusophone literature, cultural politics, and African nationalism, in particular, evidence a deep knowledge of and engagement with primary figures and movements from across the French-, English-, and Spanish-speaking world. By examining two key moments in Andrade’s thought—the consolidation of Lusophone negritude movements of the late 1940s–1950s and the Cultural Congress of Havana in 1968—this article proposes that Andrade’s address at the 1968 Cultural Congress in Havana marked a pivotal shift in his anti-colonial ideology occasioned by the contact among black and anti-colonial intellectuals through the physical sites of contest of international conferences. Andrade’s evolution thus serves as an example of how artistic and political conferences throughout the twentieth century served as important spaces where leading intellectuals could encounter and debate new ideas

and currents of thought but also demonstrates how these conferences could fundamentally shift artists' and thinkers' ideologies, politics, and aesthetics both individually and collectively.

Andrade's 1968 address, published as "Culture et Lutte Armée" (Culture and Armed Struggle), explicitly calls for abandoning the project of Negritude, which Andrade saw as an ultimately futile attempt to convince the European colonizers of colonial subjects' humanity. Andrade advocates instead looking away from Europe to models across the Global South and proposes taking up arms against colonial occupation as a "poetic act" that would produce a new revolutionary literature. Andrade expands on this set of theses in subsequent works for the rest of his life, including his posthumously published book-length study *Origens do Nacionalismo Africano* (Origins of African Nationalism). In concert with a range of non-Cuban participants in the Congress with whom he explicitly conversed, Andrade's reflections on the 1968 Congress evidence a shift in his vision of the role of literature and culture away from the trans-national and trans-linguistic collaborative projects founded on a common black identity toward a linguistically and politically nationalist-aligned view of emergent culture. Critics of Cuban and Latin American cultural history often see the 1968 Congress as an ultimately symbolic meeting with few lasting effects on a potential coordinated cultural project across the Third World. However, this was not the position held by a number of non-Cuban participants in the Congress, as Anne Garland Mahler's contribution to this volume also evidences. Indeed, Andrade's work suggests a more significant impact from the perspective of Lusophone intellectuals deeply engaged in the anti-colonial struggle, as they abandoned art predicated on a defense of the value of black expression for Europe and the West and sought to define the grounds for creating culture and art with unique legibility across the Global South.

Negritude and Black Culture before 1968

Andrade's early writings are conditioned by his experience as a black colonial subject of Portugal who protested his community's racialized political and intellectual oppression. Like other black and African intellectuals of his era, he saw poetry as a fundamental tool that colonized subjects could use to correct exoticizing or dehumanizing portrayals of black subjects emanating from European sources. Lusophone Negritude poets published their most important works in the decades after the better-known Francophone and Anglophone pioneers of the movements had circulated their texts. Thus Andrade, reflecting a deep knowledge of these international and trans-linguistic currents, situated Lusophone Negritude within the established conversations among other international theorists of the movement. He saw the Lusophone Negritude movement's "black poetry" (one of his terms for Negritude poetry) not

as poetry that celebrates a mythical African past or that emerges from a shared trans-historical racial identity, two strains of thought well developed in Francophone Négritude corpora. Rather, Andrade defines “black poetry” as poetry responsive to the lived conditions of colonized subjects, where the processes of racialization are the product of colonization, and which reflects these subjects’ particular language use, poetic forms, and cultural referents. This poetry would speak simultaneously to European, black, and African readers, a position that Andrade abandons by the late 1960s. In his post-Négritude writing, Andrade shifts away from seeing “black poetry” as directed to these multiple audiences and encourages black poets and intellectuals to speak directly to their own communities to foment armed resistance against the colonizer. In his later essays, Andrade wrote extensively about the pressing necessity of national independence for colonized people founded on local models of organization and modes of thought.

Andrade’s circulation among important groups of Francophone, Hispanophone, and Lusophone intellectuals during the latter half of the twentieth century marks the international reach of his thought about cultural liberation. While his work has been edited and circulated in French and Portuguese and is considered central to an understanding of Lusophone Négritude and to coordinated anti-colonial struggles in Africa in the mid-to-late twentieth century, it is not well known in English. Nonetheless, his perspective is fundamental to our understanding of the international reach of Négritude literary networks, black cultural vindication, and African liberation. His importance lies not only in his inclusion of the Portuguese-speaking world into conversations typically focused on French and English-language poets and thinkers. Looking to models of leftist armed struggle and radical politics in Cuba and elsewhere in Africa, Andrade also theorizes common political and aesthetic ideals based on shared experiences of oppression and colonization, rather than essentialist black identities, common language, or shared domination by a particular colonial power. Andrade’s work thus participates in the theorization of what Anne Garland Mahler sees as the origins of Global South networks in the coordinated anti-imperial ideologies developed through the Tricontinental movement (Mahler 2018)—that is, the intellectual networks that are not just focused on the axis between the colonial center and the colonized periphery, but rather on ideas and conversations that bypass the metropolis to circulate horizontally among decolonizing communities.

Négritude poetry in Portuguese has some important differences from the better-known black modernist corpora in English, French, and Spanish. First, this poetry appeared later by several decades—the first poetry collection widely recognized as Négritude poetry was Sao Tomean poet Francisco Tenreiro’s *Ilha de Nome Santo* (Island with a Sacred Name) in 1942. Second, rather than a trans-Atlantic or an

American phenomenon, it tended to be written by African colonial subjects, often those living in Europe (Andrade found few examples of “black poetry” among Brazilian poets, for example). Finally, this meant that critics writing about Lusophone poetry, as well as many of the poets themselves, were already intimately familiar with the most important poetic and theoretical texts from the Americas and elsewhere in Africa. The first Negritude poetry “notebook” published in Portuguese in 1953 contains eight poems total, written by poets from four of the five Portuguese African colonies. Co-edited by Andrade and Tenreiro, the notebook contains Andrade’s introduction situating Lusophone Negritude as part of the multi-lingual and cosmopolitan circuit of black poetry among multiple sites of black cultural expression. This positioning is evident in the inclusion of the notebook’s dedication to and inclusion of a poem by Cuban Nicolás Guillén, in Spanish, and excerpts from Martinican Aimé Césaire’s *Cahier d’un Retour au Pays Natal* (*Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*) in French. A final note explains that poems from Cape Verde were not included because the fifth Portuguese African colony had a poetic sensibility that was not “black” but “creole.” Several years later, Andrade published a second, expanded anthology focused on the entire Portuguese-speaking world, including Cape Verde and Brazil, again with an introductory essay focused on elucidating why “black poetry” cannot be assimilationist or “creole”—that is, “mixed” in nature—but rather should reflect the “blackness” that served as a common element linking African subjects writing from colonial regimes that denied or erased any basis for historical continuity or community-building beyond that imposed by the colonizers.

In his writing about Negritude, Andrade is primarily concerned with defining what constitutes “poesia negra,” or “black poetry” as a series of characteristics that are legible across geographies and languages—primarily French, Spanish, and English—in addition to the examples in Portuguese that he was dedicated to promoting. They include formal elements such as the co-presence of music, rhythm, and performance with written poetry and what he calls the “technical help” of European languages, especially when influenced by African languages and black vernacular use. They also include thematic elements such as the consciousness of the problems of the lived conditions of Africans and African-descendants, articulation of their cultural alienation from values of the past due to an ongoing colonial occupation and the “rehabilitation” of those values, and the celebration of black cultural expression in the present. Andrade thus sees blackness not as an essential feature of African-descended subjects but as a consequence of the alienating and violent ideologies of European colonization, which must be deployed poetically as a political position that exposes and protests racialized oppression. He outlines this position in the introductory essay to the 1953 notebook:

From this fact—that of Europe refusing to establish a dialogue with Africa, reducing black values to nothing, imposing on Africa its civilization and only its civilization, making black men in its own image and likeness and only its image and likeness—the “evolué,” the unrooted man, was born ... Now it is the New Negro who emerges between two wars, conscious of the problems of his particular alienation, which is colonial alienation, and reclaims his place in the areas of economic, social, and political life.

(Andrade 1953, 1)²

In the essay that accompanies the 1958 *Antologia de Poesia Negra de Expressão Portuguesa*, titled “Cultura Negro-Africana e Assimilação” (Black-African Culture and Assimilation), Andrade focuses on contesting the notions of “lusotropicalism” and “assimilation” to the colonial regime conceived and advanced by Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre and embraced by Portugal’s New State dictatorship. Andrade argues instead that the only conditions that will result in true cultural innovation are those of national independence (Andrade 1958, viii). Lusotropicalism contends that the Portuguese colonizers, because of their propensity to adapt well to the “tropics” where their colonies were established, offered more positive colonialism than other European powers through cultural, racial, and linguistic “mixing” with the indigenous populations. As a result, argues Freyre, a common “lusotropical culture” links the Lusophone areas across the globe (Freyre 1961). Andrade disputes this defense of Portuguese colonialism by showing that it can only be embraced from the perspective of the colonizer: “I would understand Luso-tropical *expression* as a movement for the *integration* of tropical values in Lusitanian culture or of the circulation of products in areas of Portuguese influence; never as a harmonization of European (luso) values with African or Oriental ones” (Andrade 1958, x–xi; emphasis in the original).³ That is, for Andrade, lusotropicalism is yet another manifestation of the extractivist exploitation that animates European colonization, transforming the metropolitan center by way of impoverishing the colonies. African poets should respond to the forced imposition of European values and culture, argues Andrade, by undertaking a systematic study of African oral and written literature, history, and folklore to draw from these sources in the creation of new, revolutionary literature of the future (1958, xii–xiv).

International conferences were central to the development of the ideas of Negritude. Pires Laranjeira observes that Lusophone Negritude, like the Negritude movements in French and English, had its roots in the Pan-African Congresses of the early twentieth century. He notes that Andrade was among the most militant of the Lusophone Negritude theorists in terms of his insistence that the process of colonial racialization that African colonial subjects shared served as a basis for the black identity that took form in Negritude poetry. This poetry would thus simultaneously establish

a political discourse that created legibility across the black world and was inevitably linked to the creation of *national* communities that would attain their own independence (Pires Laranjeira 1995, 50, 124–126). Pires Laranjeira continues that Andrade was unique among his associates in taking seriously the study of non-colonial African languages—he wrote about Kimbundu—and saw a program of widespread education and vitalization of these languages as the key to political community-building that would lead to national independence (1995, 127). However, this projection remained largely theoretical; though Andrade includes a Kimbundu poem that he translates into Portuguese as part of the 1958 anthology, the rest of the poetry, in Portuguese, responds to the pragmatic necessity of comprehensibility among colonial-educated readers. This poetry, however, would also establish a system of coded messaging of its anti-colonial critiques that would simultaneously be legible to colonized subjects and remain hidden from the colonial censors (Pires Laranjeira 1995, 176–177).

Several themes present in Andrade's earlier writing and thinking about Negritude reappear as central to his address at the 1968 Cultural Congress of Havana and subsequent writing. The first is the idea that national liberation is the inevitable end of cultural creation in colonized spaces, rather than a view that culture merely serves as a bridge between Africa and Europe, or as an end in itself. In this position, Andrade saw himself as different from Lusophone thinkers such as Tenreiro and Francophone figures such as Léopold Sédar Senghor. Secondly, Andrade focuses on cultural creation as a means to creating solidarity and comprehensibility across colonized communities, which he sees manifested in the “blackness” in “black poetry.” This is evidenced by his repeated references to the intellectual genealogy of conferences and congresses in which debates about the place of culture and anti-colonial resistance take place. By 1962, for example, Andrade makes these elements explicit: in an address delivered at Columbia University, he cites Frantz Fanon's remarks at the Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists (1959) that the political commitments of black writers and artists were consolidated around political projects of national liberation through armed struggle, arguing that this element had theretofore been “missing from the cultural question, in the way it had been originally raised by African intellectuals” (Andrade 1962, 2). In his 1968 address, reflecting the larger conceptual shift across the Global South articulated in the 1966 Tricontinental Congress and the 1968 Cultural Congress of Havana, Andrade conveys the scope of this community in terms of the configurations of the “Third World” and the “Tricontinental.” As he does so, he abandons the notion of blackness as the basis for cultural legibility and solidarity, and embraces instead a broader idea of commitment to revolutionary transformation and anti-imperial resistance as exemplified in the Cuban model.

The Cultural Congress of Havana and the Tricontinental Turn

Andrade attended two important international conferences in the late 1960s held in Havana. The first was the Tricontinental Congress of 1966, a conference focused on the consolidation of anti-imperial and anti-racist solidarity and the coordination of political action across the three titular geographies of the Americas, Africa, and Asia. The second was the Cultural Congress of Havana of 1968, an extension of the discussions of the Tricontinental to the cultural realm. The two conferences can be seen as two halves of a major shift both in Cuba's relationship toward the Third World and in conceptualizations of the coordinated theorizations of the role of culture in the politics of decolonization. Mahler has cogently argued that the Tricontinental Congress and associated cultural and political projects produced a new kind of coordinated anti-imperial ideology and action that abstracted notions of race and oppression to allow processes of mutual recognition across populations and activist groups in the decolonizing world and in "souths" in the Global North (Mahler 2018, 71–105). While the Tricontinental focused on political leadership and political organization, the Cultural Congress of Havana explicitly focused on cultural production and the role of intellectuals in decolonization, anti-imperial action, and the construction of new, revolutionary societies. It was not accidental that such consequential meetings were held in Cuba: the conferences served in part as a demonstration of Cuba's shift toward solidarity with the Third World, and Cuba remained a touchstone for leftist liberation and a model for Lusophone intellectuals and politicians in the decades following (Millar 2019, xxvii).

Almost five hundred intellectuals from across the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Europe attended the Cultural Congress of Havana in January of 1968, whose discussions centered broadly on the function of culture in the "so-called underdeveloped Third World" (Dorticós Torrado 1968) and the role of intellectuals in the construction of revolutionary societies (Acosta de Arriba 2018, 88).⁴ Important contextual events that catalyzed the Congress's themes included ongoing U.S. antagonism to Cuba and the U.S.'s perceived imperial action elsewhere in the world, particularly in Vietnam, and Ernesto "Che" Guevara's recent death in 1967. These contexts helped show the urgency of links emphasized throughout the conference between culture and direct revolutionary action. The conference was organized into five commissions, each with its own guiding questions, and with representatives that included a Cuban member as well as delegates from across the Americas, Africa, and Asia (*CCH*).⁵ Each commission submitted final resolutions and recommendations following the meeting, which were published in volumes in English, Spanish, and French by the Congress (*CCH*).

Rafael Acosta de Arriba underlines the diversity of political positions and opinions among attendees and the freedom of expression granted to all foreign delegates, though the Cuban delegates were required to submit their presentations for pre-approval to a commission that had editorial authority (2018, 88). Michele Hardesty similarly emphasizes the divisions between the intellectual exuberance that observers would see represented among the international delegates and the restrictions imposed on Cuban participants, noting the particular irony that the conference organizers banned prominent black Cuban intellectuals Walterio Carbonell, Nancy Morejón, Sara Gómez, and Rogelio Martínez Furé from the Congress as a result of a paper on race in Cuba they submitted for consideration, despite the conference's explicit focus on cultivating anti-imperial solidarity and promoting cultural and political liberation in Africa. Such inconsistencies "were not always visible to visitors, and in what had just been named the 'Year of the Heroic Guerrilla,' 1968, Cuba took advantage of its appeal to host a congress that would build strategic, if often symbolic, alliances with a wide array of intellectuals, artists, and writers, technicians, doctors, and scientists" (Hardesty 2019, 63).

While emphasizing the Congress's unique nature in convoking such a wide and diverse range of the most important cultural voices from across the tricontinental geographies, Acosta de Arriba sees the Congress, ultimately, as a failure from the perspective of the Cuban participants who hoped the event would showcase Cuba as a model to the Third World:

Unfortunately, after the last applause that welcomed with frenetic enthusiasm the tightly wound closing speech by Fidel Castro faded away, the feature that defined the period following the Congress was silence. Upon their departure, together with their mementos and emotions, the delegates took with them the only things that no one could take away, their happy memories of the days spent there. There was no follow-up action, not one, on Cuba's part. (2018, 90)⁶

Jean Franco largely agrees with Acosta de Arriba's assessment of the limited impact of the Congress when seen from the Cuban and even broader Latin American perspective, focusing on the series of repressive actions the Cuban revolutionary government took soon after the Congress to quash intellectual dissent (Franco 2002, 97–100). However, a different assessment of the impact of the discussions taking place among the participants in the Congress becomes possible when seen from outside the Cuban context.

Andrade's participation in the Cultural Congress of Havana is best understood not necessarily from the perspective of the Congress's exceptional nature nor Cuba's abandonment of the commitments discussed during the Congress but in the context of the series of similar meetings that Andrade and other important artists and intellectuals had conducted since the 1950s. Such a lens reveals how the Congress offered an opportunity for

international participants to rearticulate the grounds for tricontinental collaboration through anti-imperial ideologies distinct from Negritude. Reflecting on the guiding questions of the Congress that explored the place of culture in the Third World and the role of intellectuals in resisting colonialism and imperialism, Ali Raza points out that the Congress must be considered as part of several decades of ongoing conversations around these issues held among the participants of other conferences and meetings throughout the decades of the mid-twentieth century in which decolonization and anti-imperialist action were consistently held to be acts of culture (Raza 2019, 224).⁷ In fact, this is a trajectory that Andrade repeatedly emphasizes in his paper at the Congress, his reflections following the Congress, and in other speeches and presentations both before and after 1968. However, it is as part of his writing for and about the Congress that Andrade explicitly argues that Negritude has come to a dead end, and that decolonization must happen through a revolution in culture and through armed struggle.

Andrade both attended the preparatory seminar for the Congress in October of 1967 and presented his talk titled “Culture et Lutte Armée” (Culture and Armed Struggle) as part of the Congress’s Commission I: Culture and National Independence.⁸ In February of 1968, he published a report on the Congress for the journal *Révolution Africaine* (African Revolution), a publication of Algeria’s National Liberation Front (FLN), reflecting on culture as decolonizing praxis. The text of his address at the Congress was subsequently published in April 1968 in the FLN’s newspaper *El Moudjahid*. In both the text of his remarks at the Congress and in his report, Andrade argues that the time for Negritude had passed and that the fundamental role of writers and artists was no longer to speak back against Europe and the West to defend black subjects’ humanity. It was now to turn directly to their own communities to foment armed resistance against the colonizer. He contextualizes his remarks in the contrast between Cuba, which he sees as a unique example of success in throwing off the imperial and colonial yoke, and Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea, whose anti-colonial revolutions were still underway in the 1960s (they would not achieve independence until 1975).

In his address, Andrade covers some of the familiar ground he had analyzed in his writing on Negritude, tracing the phases of anti-colonial consciousness. First, he remarks, the colonized create an inventory of “autochthonous values”—a clear reference to Negritude’s priority on the rediscovery of African beliefs and cultural practices. This is followed by the outbreak of armed struggle as the only means by which the colonizer’s institutions can be destroyed, in order to lay the grounds for the creation of an authentic cultural life among the newly liberated. He writes:

The dominant note of poetic expression ceases to reject the assimilation of the other culture and becomes essentially the exaltation of the

emergence of the armed struggle. Awakener of consciousnesses, the poet fixes in history the encounter between the people and their struggle In the scope of literature, for instance, this exigency manifests, at the present time, in the search for a language which, coming from the people, speaks to the people. Through the strength of our revolutionary feelings, the **intentional** meaning given to the words of the language imposed by colonization, in addition to breaking up its classical structures with the insertion of the African linguistic complex, implies a **semantic** revolution. [Andrade 1970, 120–121] (1968b, 8; emphasis in the original)⁹

Emphasizing the unified position and coordinated struggle among Lusophone African communities, Andrade intersperses verses of anti-colonial poetry by the Cape Verdean poet Kaobeverdiano Dembará, the Mozambican Jorge Rebelo, and Guinean popular guerrilla verses that demonstrate the thematic, formal, and semantic shifts he identifies with aesthetic revolution.¹⁰ For example, Kaobeverdiano Dambará calls to “Arise and march, sons of Africa/ ... / ... wield your weapons” while Rebelo prophesies that “Your gun will break all the chains / it will open all prisons / it will kill all tyrants” (quoted in Andrade 1970, 120). Reflecting the language of the General Declaration of the Congress, which sees “cultural activity [as an] act of struggle,” (Cultural Congress of Havana 1968), Andrade posited armed revolution on the ground as inseparable from the aesthetic revolution—precisely because the lived reality of colonization and armed resistance is what effects the shifts in language and form captured by artists and writers. Andrade further notes that this enterprise is by definition collective, both in the sense of the “people” engaged together in the fight for national liberation and in the sense of the mutual communication and cooperation of “peoples” across the Tricontinental (1970, 121). Literature and other cultural expressions are here not separate from or supplementary to direct action, but a necessary and integral piece of revolution. Finally, he argues that it is no accident that these ideas should be articulated in Cuba, a revolutionary society “free of illiteracy and ignorance” (Andrade 1970, 121).

In his article “Réflexions autour du Congrès Culturel de La Havane” (Reflections on the Cultural Congress of Havana) published in *Révolution Africaine* in February 1968, Andrade demonstrates more explicitly how the 1968 Congress serves as a catalyst for defining new grounds for collective consciousness and collective action against colonization and imperial encroachment. He underscores how the aesthetic revolution identified in his address to the Congress must differ from the precepts of the Negritude movements that had previously brought together black poets and artists across the colonial world. To do so, he cites how the addresses of two other participants in the Congress, the Haitian poet René Depestre and the Guinean poet and playwright

Condetto Nénékhaly-Camara, join him in arguing that the new era calls for a new aesthetic practice. Andrade points to how Depestre's and Nénékhaly-Camara's critiques of Negritude reveal the limitations of the movement's foundations as a reaction to racist colonial ideologies and show how Negritude was being deployed to justify abuses by a new class of black strongman leaders. Andrade simultaneously identifies the Cuban Revolution both as a model of action for the Third World and as the event that creates the conditions for a new kind of political imagination evident in the conversations that arose during the Congress.

These points of reference in Andrade's essay suggest that we can read the Congress as a catalyst for Andrade's pivot away from seeing the colonial condition as a basis for the development of culture (as he sees in Negritude). Instead, together with other prominent intellectuals in attendance, he seeks to define the revolutionary political conditions that permit a new kind of self-definition and cultural development across the Third World that would be independent of the racist projections of colonial and imperial regimes. Citing Frantz Fanon's dictum that national liberation was the necessary condition for the creation of culture, Andrade notes that similar intellectual work had taken place starting in the 1956 Black Writers' Conference in Paris. However, the 1968 Congress expanded the relevance of the questions debated therein:

The First Congress of Black Writers and Artists that took place in Paris ... already forcefully declared that "cultural flourishing depends on the end of these twentieth-century disgraces: colonialism, the exploitation of vulnerable peoples, racism." The Congress of Havana proceeded in this area to a tricontinental amplification of the cultural question taken up by those intellectuals, from the angle of the "crisis of black cultures."

(Andrade 1968a, 41)¹¹

That is, what was seen as the concerns of the "black world" in 1956 were now the concerns of the entire Tricontinental, while being placed under the purview of the new nations emerging from colonization and neo-imperial occupation. Similarly, the conversations that would lead to independence must turn away from defending black peoples to implied European interlocutors and rather focus on conversation and coordination across the Third World.

Andrade cites two critiques of Negritude raised by Depestre and Nénékhaly-Camara as revelatory and particularly germane to those areas of the world still fighting for independence. While Andrade, Depestre, and Nénékhaly-Camara all recognize the historical importance and revolutionary nature of Negritude, Depestre, at that time residing in exile from the Duvalier regime in Cuba, points to the potential co-opting of Negritude's black identity for the purposes of obscuring class divisions

and economic inequalities and enforcing ongoing violent exploitation of common people, as he argues has taken place in Haiti (Depestre 1968, 43–44). In the passage from his address cited by Andrade, Nénékhaly-Camara contends that Negritude had opened the door to the vindication of black cultural expression while also leading to an essentializing reduction of black culture to the margins of human accomplishment. In reality, he claims, black artists and writers were passing through the same processes of mining the myths, histories, and legends of their communities as any people or nation has done elsewhere in the world (Nénékhaly-Camara 1968, 49–50).¹² For Andrade, these analyses illuminate why the time for Negritude had been replaced with the time for revolution: “The debate that begins in this way is of fundamental importance for the ideological reevaluation of a concept that has ceased to reflect the lived reality of Africa and the black condition in the New World, while the demands of our times require inserting these realities specifically within the larger framework of the anti-imperialist struggle” (Andrade 1968a, 41).¹³ Again, Andrade points to Cuba as a significant model for cultural flourishing as part of constructing the revolution, quoting Depestre’s exhortation to look to Cuba as a place where Negritude has given way to the trans-racial cooperation in the construction of a new, socialist society (1968a, 41).

1968 was the year that many see as the beginning of the end of the Euro-American Left’s love affair with the Cuban Revolution, following several high-profile censorship cases and Castro’s definitive turn toward the Soviet Union. However, there is a different dynamic between Cuba and the Global South, as Andrade’s admiration for the Cuban revolutionary example makes evident. We can see in both his address and his reflections on the Cultural Congress the enactment of Andrade’s own call to colonized and black intellectuals to speak to each other rather than to Europe, in his invocation of Cuba as both example and interlocutor for the Portuguese colonies, which had initiated the anti-colonial rebellions in 1961 and were still years away from formal independence. However, in these passages, as well, we see how the networks and conversations that emerge from these important conferences provide a crucible for the evolution of Andrade’s thinking about black identity building as an alternative to the dehumanizing effects of colonization.

Conclusions: Post-1968 Cultural Revolution and African Nationalism

In 1983, eight years after the Lusophone African nations had achieved independence, Andrade reflects that no African nationalist movement had formed without passing through a phase of recognizing and revalorizing black culture. He thus establishes a direct correlation between cultural and political action (1983, 272). In Andrade’s extended work on

the question of the intellectual roots of nationalist thinking in Africa, *Origens do nacionalismo africano* (Origins of African Nationalism), published in 1998, eight years after his death, Andrade makes his case even more explicit. By this time, he had come to see Negritude as an ideology and a cultural expression that embedded within African cultural praxis the Portuguese colonialist distinction between “indigenous African” and the category of the “assimilado,” the term for those colonial subjects who attained special legal status by virtue of closely “approximating” their Portuguese colonizers linguistically, culturally, and religiously (Andrade 1998, 185). Leonel Cosme maintains that Andrade never abandoned the work that underlay the Negritude movement if seen as the defense of the dignity and creativity of black people. However, in *Origins of African Nationalism*, Andrade makes clear his position that Negritude as a cultural movement failed to offer a sufficient break from the paradigm that generalized African others into an undifferentiated mass. In this sense, we may see his later thinking as leaving behind his project of identifying and cataloging, for example, the constitutive “black elements” of poetry and other cultural expressions. However, in his later writing, Andrade also maintains and even emphasizes the position of some Negritude poets who see blackness as lived experience that is inextricably embedded in specific cultural forms, rather than transparently translatable across languages and geographies.¹⁴ This rethinking of the movement also helps make sense of his shift to prioritizing the development of national literatures in the late 1960s and his subsequent dedication to analyzing the development of nationalist ideologies. Cosme observes this subtle shift already by 1967 in the title of another of Andrade’s later anthologies published in Algeria as *Literatura Africana de Expressão Portuguesa* (African Literature of Portuguese Expression) noting that the qualifier of “black” that had defined the poetry of prior anthologies was replaced with the geographical signifier of “African”: “there is now no space for the term ‘black.’ His major cause, now, is a different one: it has to do with using all possible resources for the anticolonial political struggle” (Cosme 2000, 138).¹⁵

In his remarks on the 1968 Cultural Congress, the Cuban revolutionary model seems to provide Andrade with an alternative that goes beyond black identity as the basis for national independence, and yet demonstrates a more specific praxis responsive to the local and regional demands of national communities. Participants in the Tricontinental and Cultural Congresses saw the conferences as sites of collaboration through which Andrade and his contemporaries debated their shared colonial histories and articulated the threat posed by imperialist encroachment and ongoing colonial occupation. They also thus emphasized the necessity of building conversations among intellectuals across the tricontinental geographies and ensuring the circulation of material culture among them. Andrade’s participation in these events shows that his vision of the

role of literature and culture's ultimate end was simultaneously the transnational collaborative projects exemplified in the international movements and conversations traced here as well as the definition and development of national culture. He saw the latter as central to the articulation of a sense of community and the construction of a political and cultural future for formerly colonized areas of the globe.

Andrade's thought about the place of culture in the larger project of decolonization evolved over the decades of the 1950s–1980s. His own intellectual trajectory from embracing Negritude to African nationalisms becomes a template in his final works for a more generalized process of how formerly colonized communities construct new cultural and political narratives in the wake of colonial occupation. The explicit arguments that Andrade makes in his address and comments on the 1968 Cultural Congress of Havana are fundamental to identifying the lasting impact of his threading the traditions of socialist, anti-imperialist, and black solidarity movements into coordinated, but site-specific, revolutionary struggles. However, this was far from a singular phenomenon: throughout his writing, Andrade repeatedly traces the evolution of his ideas in response to and sometimes in coordination with the positions and conversations that develop in international conferences and meetings among influential artists and thinkers from across the formerly colonized world. In this sense, the Cultural Congress of Havana is one important site of contest among a series of congresses that shaped and marked how leading intellectuals conceived of revolutionary action and decolonization throughout the twentieth century.

Notes

- 1 MPLA: Movimento Popular para a Libertação de Angola (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola).
- 2 “Deste facto—da Europa se negar em estabelecer diálogo com a África, reduzir a nada os valores negros, impor a sua civilização e só ela, fazer dos homens negros, homens à sua imagem e semelhança e só à sua imagem e semelhança—nasceu o <<evolúe>>, o desenraizado ... Agora é o novo negro que surge entre duas guerras, consciente dos problemas da sua particular alienação, a alienação colonial e reivindica o seu lugar nos quadros da vida económica, social e política.” Translations are my own except where otherwise credited.
- 3 “Entenderia a *expressão* luso-tropical como um movimento de *integração* de valores tropicais na cultura lusitana ou de circulação de produtos em áreas de influência portuguesa; nunca como uma harmonização dos valores europeus (lusos) com os africanos ou orientais.”
- 4 Acosta de Arriba.
- 5 The themes of the commissions were: Culture and National Independence, The Integral Formation of Man, Responsibility of Intellectuals on Problems of the Underdeveloped World, Culture, and Mass-Media, and Problems of Artistic Creation, and Problems of Scientific and Technical Works.
- 6 “Lamentablemente, después de apagados los últimos aplausos que acogieron con frenético entusiasmo el encrespado discurso de clausura de Fidel Castro,

- el rasgo que definió el tiempo posterior al Congreso fue el silencio. Al partir, junto con sus recuerdos y emociones, los delegados se llevaron lo único que nadie podía quitarles, las felices memorias de los días transcurridos. No hubo ninguna acción de continuidad, ni una sola, por parte de Cuba.”
- 7 Raza mentions the importance of the Afro-Asian Writers Conferences of the 1950s–1970s, while Hardesty notes the 1955 Bandung conference, the Non-Aligned Movement conference in 1961, the Tricontinental, and 1967s Organization of Latin American Solidarity congress as important predecessors to the Cultural Congress of Havana.
 - 8 Addresses at the Congress were available in Spanish, English, and French. I quote from the French here because it is the language in which Andrade published his essay.
 - 9 “La note dominante de l’expression poétique cesse d’être le refus de l’assimilation à l’autre pour devenir essentiellement l’exaltation de l’émergence de la lutte armée. Éveilleur des consciences, c’est l’poète qui fixe pour l’histoire la rencontre entre le peuple et son combat Sur le plan de la littérature, par exemple, cette exigence se manifeste à l’heure actuelle, par la recherche d’un langage qui, venant du peuple, parle au peuple. Avec la charge de notre émotion révolutionnaire, la signification **intentionnelle** donnée aux mots de la langue imposée par la colonisation ainsi que l’éclatement de ses structures classiques par l’insertion du corps linguistique africain, amorcent une révolution **sémantique**.” The English translation of the essay cited here, published in Irwin Silber’s collection of essays from the 1968 Congress, omits several passages included in the published versions in French and manuscript versions in French and Spanish.
 - 10 Kaobeverdiano Dembará is the nom-de-plume for Felisberto Vieira Lopes (b. 1937), a poet who wrote in Cape Verdean creole; Jorge Rebelo (b. 1940) is best known for his poetry of the anti-colonial struggle.
 - 11 “Le premier congrès des écrivains et artistes noirs tenu à Paris ... déclarait déjà avec force que <<l’épanouissement de la culture est conditionné par la fin de ces hontes de XXème siècle: le colonialisme, l’exploitation des peuples faibles, le racisme>>. Le congrès de La Havane procéda dans ce domaine à une amplification tricontinentale de la question culturelle abordée alors par ces intellectuels, sur l’angle de la <<crise des cultures noires>>.”
 - 12 Many thanks to Katerina González-Seligmann for assistance with these references.
 - 13 “Le débat que s’amorce ainsi est d’une importance fondamentale pour la réévaluation idéologique d’un concept que a cessé de refléter la vivante réalité d’Afrique et la condition noire dans le nouveau monde, alors que les exigences de notre temps commandent d’insérer ces réalités spécifiquement dans le cadre plus vaste du combat anti-impérialiste.”
 - 14 Pires Laranjeira sees Andrade as reading Césaire in this way.
 - 15 “O termo *negra* já não tem lugar. O grande móbil, agora, é outro: trata-se de usar todos os recursos para a luta política anticolonialista.” This shift is consistent in Andrade’s 1969 French-language anthology published by Pierre Oswald titled *Poesie africain d’expression portugais* (African Poetry of Portuguese Expression).

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3 The Limits of Global Solidarity: Reading the 1968 Cultural Congress of Havana through Andrew Salkey's *Havana Journal*

Anne Garland Mahler¹

From January 4–11, 1968, nearly 500 delegates from 70 countries and 110 journalists congregated at the Hotel Habana Libre for the Cultural Congress of Havana (CCH; OAS 1968CCH 1968, 14). Advertised as a “meeting of intellectuals from all the world on problems of Asia, Africa, and Latin America,” the congress drew broad participation from the arts and included literary giants like Aimé Césaire and Alex La Guma (CCH 1968, 1). It focused on the role of intellectuals within radical political projects and brought geographically distant theorists into dialogue on how to reframe the relationship between politics and cultural production. This essay studies the CCH as a key site of Global South intellectual encounter and Cold War cultural diplomacy.²

The CCH was conceived as a cultural follow-up to the 1966 Tricontinental Conference and should be understood within the context of the anti-imperialist solidarity movement of Tricontinentalism.³ This connection to Tricontinentalism was widely recognized by the delegates. For example, in a letter regretting his absence, Jean-Paul Sartre described the congress as an “immense tricontinental effort made by the liberated peoples” (Silber 1968, 3–4). In the spirit of Tricontinental solidarity, the Cuban government went to great lengths to make its guests feel welcome and to communicate an openness to its friends worldwide. Likewise, the world’s intellectuals used the congress to draw comparisons between their own contexts and Cuba, thinking cultural questions through the transnational lens facilitated by Tricontinental solidarity politics.

The unguarded posture of internationalism that the Cuban state displayed in the CCH helped solidify friendships with intellectuals around the globe. Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt has characterized the CCH, for instance, as “the moment at which Cuba’s international prestige reached its zenith” (2015, 268). However, Cuba’s open posture through the CCH also exposed it to external evaluation by intellectuals who

understood that they had been invited into such a role, allowing foreigners to gain nuanced perspectives on Cuba's cultural politics and to question elements of its official discourse. For these reasons, the CCH would eventually represent as much of a closing for Cuban cultural politics as it would an opening, pushing the limits of Cuba's commitment to internationalism and revealing its frayed edges.

This essay examines such points of contact and dissonance within the CCH through an analysis of *Havana Journal* (1971), the memoir by Jamaican writer Andrew Salkey about his participation in the CCH alongside his Trinidadian writer friends C.L.R. James and John La Rose. Unlike Salkey's better known literary works, *Havana Journal* is written in the hurried brevity of a daily journal, and likely for this reason, has not been analyzed in depth. However, in my reading, *Havana Journal* sheds light on how the CCH revealed as many fissures as solidarities, and its analysis provides a window onto a more nuanced understanding of global solidarity movements within the cultural Cold War.

Salkey's *Havana Journal* is one of several texts inspired by the CCH.⁴ For example, the conference's interrogation of intellectuals' participation in revolutionary politics formed the backdrop for what would become one of Cuba's most well-known films, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's *Memorias de subdesarrollo* (1968), released later that year and based on the eponymous novel (1965) by CCH delegate Edmundo Desnoës. Moreover, Roberto Fernández Retamar's speech at the CCH displayed the seeds of what would become his most famous work, *Calibán: Apuntes sobre la cultura en nuestra América* (1971).⁵ Beyond works directly inspired by the CCH, Salkey's text forms part of a broader genre of Cold War radical travel writing, alongside other memoirs by leftist writers about their experiences in Havana in the late 1960s and early 70s.⁶ It stands as well among Black radical memoirs about participation in global solidarity conferences, like Richard Wright's *The Colour Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference* (1956), which describes his attendance at the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia. When viewed concurrently, Wright and Salkey's texts point to a tension held within solidarity discourses more broadly, wherein the affective crossings of borders, and the related efforts to draw parallels between disparate contexts, can lead as easily to dissonance as to harmony. As I will suggest, the author's faltering navigation of this tension emerges as a key feature of literatures depicting sites of Cold War internationalism, such as the Bandung meeting or the CCH.

In addition to its documentation of the CCH, Salkey's *Havana Journal* is significant because it details how Salkey contacted a burgeoning movement of Black Cuban intellectuals in the late 1960s. In many ways, the book registers 1968 Havana as a site of Black cultural awakening. However, almost all of Salkey's documented interactions with Black Cubans took place outside the conference itself. Although not mentioned

in *Havana Journal*, the CCH led to controversy among prominent Black Cuban intellectuals after state officials prevented them from speaking at the congress about ongoing racial inequality on the island. This group would face reprisals for their criticisms, representing a significant turning point in their work and lives in subsequent years. In this way, even as the CCH attempted to create an open Global South intellectual community, it reveals how such internationalism in the cultural arena could be used to further exclusionary domestic politics. Through an analysis of Salkey's *Havana Journal*, this essay traces such frictions within the CCH, holding it up as a useful lens for examining the larger complexities of the cultural Cold War.

Setting the Scene

The idea for the CCH originated at the 1966 Havana Tricontinental Conference where participating intellectuals expressed the need to define their role in revolutionary political projects (Gordon-Nesbitt 2015, 222). The Tricontinental Conference established the Organization of Solidarity with the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (OSPAAAL), which grew out of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization (AAPSO), established in Cairo in December 1957. Although the AAPSO had its own literary branch and literary journal, when the AAPSO expanded into Latin America through the OSPAAAL, it did not create a corresponding cultural wing. However, the 1968 CCH represented a major effort to intersect its Tricontinental vision with the cultural field.

In May 1967, it was announced at the Fourth Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers that Cuba would be hosting a "Tricontinental Cultural Congress," and apparently, Soviet financial support was arranged at this time (OAS and Special Consultative Committee on Security 1968, 1). A "Cultural Committee" then organized a planning preparatory seminar in Havana (Gordon-Nesbitt 2015, 222; OAS and Special Consultative Committee on Security 1968, 5). The five themes chosen by the seminar became the conference's five commissions: Culture and National Independence; The Integral Growth of Man; The Intellectual's Responsibility towards the Problems of the Underdeveloped World; Culture and the Mass Media; and Problems of Artistic Creation and of Scientific and Technical Work. All papers were translated beforehand into English, Spanish, and French, and distributed to the delegates (Silber 1968, 8). The delegates represented, as Irwin Silber writes, "artists, writers, economists, scientists, sociologists, technicians, athletes, teachers, musicians, philosophers, doctors, folklorists, journalists, and numerous other 'intellectual workers'" (Silber 1968, 7). Many of the largest delegations did not come from Asia, Africa, or Latin America, but from Europe and the United States.⁷ Twenty-one delegates participated from the United States, and among them, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) sent five activists (Silber 1968, 9–10).

The commissions, each led by a chairing committee, met over six days (OAS and Special Consultative Committee on Security 1968, 16; CCH 1968, M/34 3/I). In the evenings, delegates attended cultural events, including the Third World Exposition in Havana's open-air pavilion, which used posters, films, and sound effects to tell a collective history of the Third World's exploitation and liberation struggle (Salkey 1971, 161). At the end, the commission wrote their final resolutions, which were approved before the final plenary session on January 12. That evening, Castro delivered the closing address at the Chaplin Theater (OAS and Special Consultative Committee on Security 1968, 18).

Salkey, James, and La Rose elected to participate in Commission III, "The Intellectual's Responsibility towards the Problems of the Underdeveloped World," which shaped Salkey's experience of the congress. But Salkey's *Havana Journal* also shows how the CCH facilitated a South-South intellectual exchange that transcended the conference itself. Salkey first heard of the conference in May 1967 when Cuban poet Pablo Armando Fernández attended a meeting of the Caribbean Artists Movement, held in Orlando Patterson's London apartment. Then, in July 1967, Salkey met Cuban novelist Edmundo Desnoës, who also encouraged his attendance (Salkey 1971, 11–12). These instances show how the CCH drew upon established networks in metropolitan centers. Even the process of traveling to the conference facilitated the merger of cultural networks from around the world. En route to the CCH on the flight from London to Madrid, Salkey, C.L.R. James, and John La Rose traveled with South African writers Alex La Guma and Dennis Brutus. Because of a delay, the group spent a day and night in Madrid and then joined 72 more delegates the next morning for their flight to Havana (Salkey 1971, 13).

Networks formed in Europe then transferred to Havana; Desnoës and Armando Fernández, who first mentioned the congress to Salkey, became unofficial Havana guides to the West Indian delegates, helping them gain entry to major cultural institutions, like Casa de las Américas and the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC). Prior to the congress opening, Desnoës and Armando Fernández helped La Rose plan a 67th birthday party for C.L.R. James with such high-profile guests as Césaire and René Depestre (91). Desnoës gifted James an advance copy of the English translation of his novel, initially titled *Inconsolable Memories*, which was in the process of adaptation to what would become the classic film *Memorias de subdesarrollo*.

The novel and film depict the "drama of underdevelopment" that Cuban President Dorticós detailed in his opening speech as the central theme of the congress, portraying underdevelopment as a cultural as well as economic problem (CCH 1968, 3). Cultural underdevelopment referred both to the material conditions that facilitated the distribution of U.S. and Western European cultural production over domestic products as well as to the internalization of capitalist cultural values. Dorticós

described Cuba's interest in hosting the congress as an opportunity to consider how intellectuals could work to overcome this underdevelopment by participating in "the development of the personality of the new revolutionary man" (CCH 1968, 8). This intention to shift the role of the intellectual from one complicit in cultural underdevelopment to one who helps shape the new socialist man was central to Desnøes's novel and would be at the heart of Gutiérrez Alea's film. Salkey reprinted several sections of Desnøes's novel in *Havana Journal*, and the release of the filmic adaptation should be understood within the immediate backdrop of the 1968 CCH. For this reason, Desnøes's comments at the congress are particularly significant. Examining them, alongside Salkey's interactions with Desnøes, will help describe key tensions—specifically regarding the position of Black American intellectuals—that run throughout *Havana Journal* and that are a feature of the CCH as a whole.

The Position of Black Americans at the CCH

Desnøes spoke in Commission IV on "Culture and the Mass Media." Although they received a copy, Salkey, James, and La Rose were not present for Desnøes's talk since they participated in Commission III. Desnøes began his speech, "The Secret Weapons," speaking in the first-person plural on behalf of "the majority of mankind" who are "working as slaves without pay or profit" and who have been kept in "backwardness, ignorance, and famine" (CCH 1968, CIV/3 1/I). Beyond the "pillage of our natural and human resources," he argued, this wretched of the earth is also under attack through the "secret weapons" of the mass media (CIV/3 1/I). In describing these secret weapons, Desnøes referenced SNCC activist Stokely Carmichael's 1966 article, "What We Want," in which he discusses how Tarzan movies caused him to internalize racism against the dark-skinned Indigenous peoples depicted. Desnøes then cited African American writer Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), arguing that "Western powers" use mass media "to obliterate the humanity of the colonized peoples" (CIV/3 1/I). He remarked that violence is the only way out of such obliteration and called for the creation of an "armed propaganda" (CIV/3 4/I).

Desnøes's citation of African American intellectuals to discuss broader contexts aligned with the conference's official discourse. Its "General Resolution" addressed the circumstances of U.S. African Americans, naming their oppression as a central focus of the congress. It stated that "the Congress, in saluting this struggle of the U.S. Black population against its oppressors, in condemning all forms of racism, emphasizes that the elimination of racism is inseparably linked to the disappearance of imperialism" (OAS and Special Consultative Committee on Security 1968, 104). This position emerged from the larger context of the

Tricontinental's centering of African American struggles and the Cuban government's outreach to African American activists at this time (Mahler 2018).

While Desnøes identified with the suffering experienced by Black people in his speech, some of his language, such as the use of “backwardness” and “ignorance” to describe this collective subjectivity, seems to reflect the very internalized racism that Carmichael critiqued. Moreover, Salkey notes that the book-jacket of the English translation of Desnøes's novel describes Desnøes as the “Son of a Cuban father and a White Jamaican mother” (Salkey 1971, 83). Salkey admits that this description “disturbed me slightly” but does not comment further (83). One can surmise that Salkey was disturbed that the book-jacket explicitly clarifies that although Desnøes is of Jamaican descent, he is not of African descent. In the most critical reading, the book-jacket appears to engage in a white supremacist validation of Desnøes's work by distancing him from blackness, assuring the reader of his racial purity, and signaling an upper-class status through identifying the author's mother with a historically white, Jamaican elite. In a more generous reading, we might consider that the book-jacket attempts to explain Desnøes's blue-eyed, Caucasian appearance to a reading public that associates Jamaica with its majority Black population. The fact that the book-jacket asserts the mother's but not the Cuban father's whiteness suggests that, for the publisher, being Cuban implies being white, or at least not Black. Here, Cubanness is associated with whiteness or perhaps with a Spanish-Indigenous mestizo identity that is imagined as excluding Afro-descendancy. The responsibility for this description of Desnøes lies most likely with the U.S. publisher of the English translation, New American Library. However, the distancing of Cubanness from blackness that Salkey notes in this instance comes up repeatedly throughout *Havana Journal*. Similar to this moment in which Salkey comments only that he is slightly disturbed by the book-jacket, he frequently refrains from overtly naming the problem. Yet the question of anti-blackness in Cuba is pervasive in *Havana Journal*, appearing perhaps most significantly regarding the participation of West Indian intellectuals in the CCH.

To understand this issue, it is important to note that Salkey felt connected to Cuba through a shared West Indian landscape and culture.⁸ From his first encounter with Cuban poet Pablo Armando Fernández in London, he remarks that the poet's “warmth and directness” were “infectiously West Indian” (1971, 12). Upon arriving in Havana, the drive from the airport reminds him of the “Jamaican ride-in from Palisades airport to Central Kingston” (1971, 20). He reflects that “there was something very definitely West Indian” about Roberto Fernández Retamar, who presided over Commission III, comparing him admiringly to *Anancy*, the trickster spider of Jamaican folk tradition (1971, 103). Later, when Salkey visits Matanzas, he is “haunted” by the ramgoat

roses outside his hotel, because they remind him of an arrangement at the Hope Gardens in Kingston (1971, 269). He asks several staff members the local name of the roses, and they bring back memories of Jamaican medicinal “folkways” (1971, 270). Upon leaving Matanzas, the hotel manager embraces Salkey, pointing to the roses and saying, “[w]e learn about it one day” (1971, 275). In this embrace, Salkey implies that it is a shared West Indian geography (the ramgoat roses) that unites them. Ultimately, he writes that it “became obvious to me that I had come to Cuba primarily as a West Indian, knowing implicitly, incontrovertibly, that Cuba was a West Indian island, quintessentially so, a chain-link with my own island and of the southerly archipelago to which they both belong historically” (1971, 268).

And yet, even as he searches for evidence of these linkages, Salkey’s experience at the CCH reveals fissures in this vision of a collective West Indian identity. On the first day of the conference, La Rose expressed concern to Salkey about “the curious ‘non-existence’ of the English-speaking West Indian intellectual and artist within the deliberations of the Commission and within those of the Congress as a whole” (Salkey 1971, 104). The problem for La Rose seemed to arise from the Congress’s definition of the Third World as “Asia, Africa, and Latin America,” in which “Latin America” fails to acknowledge the English-speaking West Indies (Salkey 1971, 104). In the opening statements of Commission III, Retamar explained that the duties of the Chair would rotate among the Cubans and African and Asian delegates, giving direction to those from the “underdeveloped world” (Salkey 1971, 102). La Rose spoke up to ask about the position of the West Indian delegates in the Commission and, according to Salkey, was given “an affectionately elliptical reply” by Retamar (1971, 103). Then, SNCC delegate Chico Neblett raised the question of the African Americans present and why they were “being left out of the considerations of the underdeveloped category of delegates?” (1971, 103). Salkey writes that Retamar replied by saying that “I’m sure there’s a place for you and your fellow delegates from S.N.C.C. If there isn’t, then there can’t possibly be a place for me either” (1971, 103). In this instance, Retamar, similar to Desnoës, drew a connection between his own experience of oppression and that experienced by Neblett and other Black Americans. However, he used this comparison to refrain from responding to the concern and to avoid ceding power to any of the English-speaking Black American delegates.

The following day, C.L.R. James brought up this issue once again. In his speech, James emphasized the “highly significant role” of West Indian intellectuals, like Marcus Garvey, George Padmore, and Frantz Fanon “in the destruction of European control of Africa” as well as in the “history of Western civilization” (CCH 1968, CIII/19 1/I).⁹ He listed the many significant West Indian intellectuals, in which he included

Castro, his fellow West Indian delegates, Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier, and Trinidadian-born Stokely Carmichael, among others. In this way, he emphasized the question raised by La Rose by calling attention to the centrality of West Indian thinkers to the conference. He argued that it is now time for West Indian intellectuals to turn their attention away from Africa and Europe and toward building a mass base in the Americas and “in the population of the West Indies itself” (CIII/19 1/I). He then critiqued the make-up of the conference by saying that this mass population “should have been formally represented here, in a Congress of this kind” (CIII/19 2/I). James’s critique here is a bit unclear. While he suggested that the West Indies were underrepresented at the conference, by including Cuban intellectuals like Castro and Carpentier in his definition of West Indians, he contradicted this argument.¹⁰ However, he also argued that the masses were not well represented, suggesting a critique of the exclusive presence of professional intellectuals at the CCH. Either way, his comments clearly concerned a lack of representation.

Examining La Rose and Neblett’s previous questions alongside James’s comments suggests that the problematics of representation may have transcended the issue of mere terminology in which “Latin America” does not account for the British West Indies. It is notable that all these critiques came from Black American delegates, and when C.L.R. James spoke of West Indian intellectuals (in which he named Bellay, Dumas, Césaire, Wilson Harris, Carmichael), he primarily spoke of Black writers. Reading between the lines, these critiques point to an unspoken problem at the CCH in which although there were many Caribbean intellectuals present, Black intellectuals from the Caribbean and from the Americas more broadly were underrepresented. Katerina Gonzalez Seligmann has read James’s statements similarly, arguing that while James articulated an explicit Leninist critique of the conference’s attribution of vanguard leadership roles to intellectuals, he included an implicit critique of the “absence of Caribbean positioning and the underrepresentation of black Cuban intellectuals” (2019, 70). Like Salkey’s statement that he was slightly disturbed by Desnoës’s book-jacket, the issue of Black American underrepresentation is not overtly stated but clearly implied.

Despite this underrepresentation, the CCH did in fact bring Salkey and his friends into contact with other Black American intellectuals, especially with a loosely affiliated group of young Black intellectuals that had emerged in Cuba in the mid-1960s (Guerra 2012, 256). Salkey connected with several of these intellectuals, and the book makes a point to register this emerging Black Cuban arts movement. For example, Part 1 of *Havana Journal* opens with a quote by Afro-Cuban poet Nancy Morejón, and Salkey writes that Sara Gómez, one of three Black filmmakers at ICAIC, invited Salkey and La Rose to attend a screening of her latest film (Salkey 1971, 27). Several times, Salkey and La Rose attended

the play, *María Antonia*, by Afro-Cuban playwright Eugenio Hernández Espinosa, which had an all-Black cast and production team (Guerra 2012, 270). The play, which depicts a Black Cuban neighborhood before the Revolution, was included in a list of entertainment given to conference attendees, and Salkey chatted with the playwright after the show (1971, 143). Perhaps most significant, Salkey conducted an interview with Esteban Montejo, the 108-year old former maroon and narrator of Miguel Barnet's classic *Biografía de un cimarrón* (1966), which he reprinted in *Havana Journal* (1971, 166–185). He also met Rogelio Martínez Furé, a specialist of Afro-Cuban music, and attended a demonstration of Afro-Cuban religious practices. Indeed, in many ways, Havana emerges in this text as a center of Black international cultural exchange. This exchange would not have taken place were it not for the CCH that brought Black intellectuals like Salkey to Cuba.

However, with the exception of a brief interaction with Nicolás Guillén, one of the few Black Cuban delegates at the conference, all of these interactions took place outside the conference's official structure. Although examples like the play *María Antonia* reveal that Black Cubans were involved with the CCH, it would appear that they were involved primarily in forms of entertainment and were not well represented in the intellectual dialogue of the Congress's five commissions. Indeed, the marginalization of Black Cuban intellectuals from the CCH has been documented. In 1967, for example, members of this group reportedly prepared a statement on racism in Cuba that they submitted for presentation at the CCH (Abreu 2012; Guerra 2012, 273–274; Moore 1988, 307–312). Although this statement is often referenced, the contents contained therein remain unavailable.¹¹ This cooperation and commentary by Afro-Cuban intellectuals was reportedly labeled by Minister of Education and CCH host José Llanusa Gobel as seditious. The exclusion of Black Cubans from the CCH emanated from a larger hypocrisy around racial equality in revolutionary Cuban society, which Salkey witnessed during his time in Havana.

Racial Equality in Revolutionary Cuba

Early on, the Cuban Revolution made strides in improving racial inequality, especially regarding the desegregation of Cuban society, but these changes slowed significantly following Castro's declaration of the socialist nature of the Revolution in April 1961 (de la Fuente 2011, 358–373). By early 1962, official discourse claimed that racial discrimination in the public sphere had been eliminated fully by the economic reforms in communist Cuba (Salkey 1971, 21). Salkey noted the persistent racial divisions that undermined the Revolution's rhetoric. On his first day, in a discussion on "class and colour in the West Indies" with the Cuban guides assigned to the foreign delegates, Salkey was "told

rapturously that both problems were some of the very first swept away by the Revolution” (Salkey 1971, 21). To this, Salkey mentioned that he had observed “Black and not so light-skinned workers still holding jobs on lowest rungs of menial ladder at airport and on catering staff in hotel,” which the guides dismissed as simply “the aftermath” of Black “non-mobility for years” prior to the Revolution (1971, 21–22). One of the guides added that “Comandante Juan Almeida, who’s the head of our armed forces, is a Negro,” which Salkey noted in his journal sounded like “liberal tokenism” (1971, 22). Despite these misgivings, once Salkey left the hotel, he began to see what he interpreted as jobs according to ability, with “Black Cubans everywhere on the ‘ladder’; so were White and not-so-White Cubans. Nothing like a broader look-see on one’s own” (1971, 24).

However, even after this broader look, these questions never dissipate in *Havana Journal*. Salkey and La Rose both noticed that Cubans “tend to move in ‘shade’ groups” (Salkey 1971, 157). Salkey reflected on this tendency in desegregated Cuba, writing that “[t]he gate and the fence had been torn down, we knew, but the inmates had refused to mingle,” an observation that supposedly caused “heartburn” among their Cuban guides (1971, 157). Salkey does not comment on the race of those Cubans who experienced such discomfort, but throughout *Havana Journal*, he frequently notes when someone with whom he interacts is Black and even self-consciously points out this tendency. For this reason, one can assume that those Cubans experiencing “heartburn” were white or mestizo. Salkey’s guide, a white Cuban named Marcos Díaz Mastellari, commented that he was bothered by the conversations between James, La Rose, and the Jamaican student Robert Hill in which they were always “talking politically about White men and Black men” because “class is the thing to look at, not race” (Salkey 1971, 79). Hill responded by rejecting Mastellari’s simplistic subsuming of racial discrimination under class inequity.

Such conflicts are revelatory because even as Salkey draws parallels between Cuba and Jamaica through a shared West Indian experience, his Cuban friends frequently resist his interpretations. This resistance on the part of Salkey’s Cuban interlocutors in *Havana Journal* comes from two main arguments: one, that the Revolution has eliminated racial inequality, and two, that it is class difference and not race that has historically determined Cuban society. The West Indians’ observations expose as false the first claim that the Revolution has eliminated racial inequality. For example, La Rose noted that “the Revolution has to acknowledge the irreparable damage inflicted by the former Cuban slave and colonial societies” and “no revolution, however cataclysmic, however total, can disperse it in nine short years” (Salkey 1971, 158). Additionally, their observations disrupt the longer-held pre-Revolutionary notion that racial mixing resulted in a class-based Cuban society in which race does not figure. Mastellari seems to resist what he perceives as the imposition of a black/

white racial dichotomy on a Cuban social order based on racial mixing. However, James' and La Rose's Trinidad also has a range of racial categories that have historically mapped onto class categories, in which lighter skin indexes higher class status and vice versa. Thus, in noticing shade groups, the West Indian delegates drew from their knowledge of other similar contexts, calling into question Cuba's particular brand of racial exceptionalism within the broader Latin American discourse of *mestizaje*.

In this sense, Salkey's *Havana Journal* has important similarities and differences with perhaps its most recognizable predecessor, Wright's *The Colour Curtain*, which details his attendance at the 1955 Asian-African Conference in Bandung. Wright understood his connection to this meeting through the fact that all "these people were ex-colonial subjects, people whom the white West called 'coloured' peoples," which he believed allowed him and his interviewees to mutually identify with one another (Wright 1956, 9). However, after reading Wright's essay, "Indonesian Notebook," which later became part of *The Color Curtain*, Wright's host in Indonesia—the novelist Mochtar Lubis—wrote that Wright had seen Indonesia "through 'coloured glasses,' and he had sought behind every attitude he met colour and racial feelings" (Roberts and Foulcher 2016, 10). Indonesian writer Beb Vuyk later repeated this impression, describing Wright as "color crazy" (Salkey 1971, 187). The inaccurate interpretations of at least some of Wright's account is clear in his description of Indonesians' sanitary practices in which he claims that they do not use toilet paper because of the difficulty of importing it from Europe rather than for religious reasons (1971, 174). As Indonesian writer Fritz Kandou pointed out, this detail is "proof that this writer's attitude is not always objective" (1971, 174).

Salkey's own desire for connection with Cubans often leads him to project a shared West Indian experience onto his interlocutors, which is similarly met with objections by locals who claim that he is misreading their context. Both texts demonstrate conflicts that emerge because of the author's desire to draw parallels between disparate contexts through the framework of solidarity. However, whereas Wright misunderstands many aspects of his experiences in Indonesia, a context with which he is not familiar, Salkey seems to have accurate insights based on experiences in Caribbean islands with relatively similar histories. The author's navigation of the tension between an affective bond of solidarity with his interlocutors and an unfamiliarity with their context is a key feature of literatures about Cold War sites of cultural diplomacy, like the Bandung meeting or the CCH.

Cuban Cultural Politics and the Limits of Solidarity

The way that Salkey's Cuban interlocutors demonstrated a radical openness to outsiders, bending over backwards to welcome delegates like

Salkey to Havana, while defensively rejecting his observations, represents on a small scale how the Cuban government would respond after the CCH. At the same time that the CCH helped to create a global intellectual community and represented a moment of Cuba's openness, it was also a turning point towards a more rigid notion of arts and culture within Cuba. Ideas expressed at the conference about what it means to be a revolutionary intellectual were then used to differentiate between revolutionaries and so-called counterrevolutionaries within Cuba's intellectual community.

The most cited example of this turn occurred in the so-called Padilla Affair. In October 1968, nine months after the CCH, Cuban poet Heberto Padilla was awarded the National Union of Writers and Artists in Cuba prize for his book of poetry, *Fuera del juego* (1968). However, soon afterwards, the Revolutionary Armed Forces' magazine *Verde Olivo*, edited by Cuban poet Luis Pavón Tamayo, published articles condemning the disillusioned tone of the poems, which were followed by a series of roundtable discussions (Gordon-Nesbitt 2015, 276–278). Later, on March 20, 1971, Padilla was arrested on charges of counter-revolution reportedly because of a novel he was writing. In response, on April 9, 1971, 54 Latin American and European intellectuals published an open letter to Castro in *Le Monde* protesting Padilla's imprisonment and raising concerns about intellectual freedoms. Julio Cortázar, who served on the chairing committee of Commission III alongside Retamar, was one of the authors of this letter, and several other signatories also participated in the CCH.

Largely in response to this letter, Cuba held the First National Conference on Education and Culture from April 23–30, 1971. This conference announced the beginning of a process of *depuración* (purification) of the nation's cultural institutions and the naming of Luis Pavón Tamayo to oversee the process (Fornet 2007, 16). The conference's resolutions condemned bourgeois clothing styles and described homosexuality as a "social pathology" in opposition to revolutionary militancy ("At the Root" 1971, 129). It concluded that gay people would not be allowed to engage youth in cultural activities, announcing their removal from positions of institutional influence (Fornet 2007).

The Padilla Affair is generally viewed as the beginning of what Ambrosio Fornet has termed the *quinquenio gris* (five gray years) (1971–1976), a period of intensified repression of intellectual freedom in Cuba that actually lasted closer to 15 years (1968–1983) (Navarro 2002, 198). In response to the international outcry over Padilla's imprisonment, Retamar published his renowned *Calibán* (1971). In this essay, which is frequently cited out of the context of the repressive intellectual politics in which it was published, Retamar characterizes Latin America, and especially Cuba's history of anti-colonial resistance, as embodied in the figure of Caliban, the native island inhabitant who rebels against his

European master Prospero from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611). According to Retamar, the Latin American intellectual has a choice between allying himself with Caliban or serving Prospero. In other words, Latin American intellectuals, and especially those troubled over Cuba's relationship to freedom of expression, have a choice between supporting the Revolution embodied in the figure of Caliban or furthering imperialism. Many of the seeds for Retamar's arguments in *Calibán* were present in his speech at the CCH just three years before. *Calibán* is thus a clear example of how ideas generated by the exchange at the CCH could be used against those very intellectuals who participated in this dialogue.

Beyond the turn that the 1968 CCH would represent in Cuban cultural politics more broadly, it was a defining moment specifically for Black arts in Cuba. At this point, Black artists began both making work more overtly critical of the Revolution and facing increasing censorship. Those who participated in preparing a statement on racism in Cuba for the CCH were especially subject to reprisals. Apparently, because of her involvement in this document, Nancy Morejón was banned from publishing her poetry from 1969 to 1975 (Guerra 2012, 273). In 1968, Afro-Cuban filmmaker Nicolás Guillén Landrián would make his most critical film to date, *Coffea arábica* (1968) about the Havana Greenbelt campaign to plant coffee in the peripheries of Havana. During the CCH, this campaign was in full swing and Salkey notes that Castro's speech about the campaign played repeatedly on the radio. Guillén Landrián's *Coffea arábica* ironized the hype around the campaign and critiqued it for furthering racial inequality in the division of labor.¹² *Coffea arábica* would face immediate censorship and would contribute to the filmmaker's eventual expulsion from ICAIC in 1971.

In the case of Sara Gómez, she would transition from the film *Y tenemos sabor* (1967), which Salkey viewed, about Afro-Cuban folk music instruments to a film trilogy that called attention to the overrepresentation of poor Black Cubans in the Isle of Youth's reform schools. Only the second of these films, *Una isla para Miguel* (1968), was ever shown to the public and in limited release (Guerra 2012, 270). Regarding Eugenio Hernández Espinosa's *María Antonia*, Salkey mentioned in *Havana Journal* that although this play formed part of the conference activities, conference staff discouraged him from attending. Shortly after the CCH, *María Antonia* was shut down by Lisandro Otero, the chair of CCH Commission IV and President of the National Council of Culture, who called the play "deforming" (Guerra 2012, 273). Historian Lillian Guerra writes that *María Antonia* directly contradicted the Revolution's official discourse, representing "a frontal assault on the reproduction of black gratitude, black cultural inferiority, and the supposedly defective class consciousness of slum dwellers in the Revolution's grand narrative" (2012, 273). *María Antonia* was not restaged for almost twenty years (2012, 275).

All these complex dynamics converged on the 1968 CCH. If Salkey refrained from overtly naming the problems he intuited, his memoir reveals insights that can be read between the lines. Salkey's *Havana Journal* was not published until 1971, and by then, Salkey was likely aware of the repressive turn in Cuba's cultural policies. He may have purposefully held back critique in order to protect his Cuban colleagues or to present the Cuban government in a positive light. Either way, the ambiguity of his comments suggest that he knew more than he let on.

As *Havana Journal* reveals, the CCH represented an exciting possibility towards the open exchange of ideas among intellectuals around the globe. Moreover, Salkey managed to circulate outside the conference to gain access to a burgeoning movement of Black Cuban intellectuals in the late 1960s. However, the CCH also revealed the limitations of Cuba's stated commitment to Black freedom and its rhetoric of internationalist solidarity. It is in these complexities where the CCH emerges as a significant site of Cold War cultural diplomacy, representing both a platform for the formation of a global network of leftist intellectuals and a crucial turning point for the Cuban Revolution's cultural politics. In sum, the 1968 CCH stands as an important Cold War "site of contest" rich for further study.

Notes

- 1 Thank you to Njelle Hamilton and the volume's editors for comments on earlier versions of this essay. Research conducted at the Biblioteca Nacional de Cuba José Martí was supported by a University of Virginia Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences grant.
- 2 I use the term Global South, rather than Third World, because of how the congress drew ideological linkages among intellectuals from around the globe, including the United States and Europe. For a bibliography on the Global South as an ideological rather than necessarily geographic category, see Mahler 2017.
- 3 For a study of Tricontinentalism, see Mahler 2018.
- 4 For example, see Lanie Millar's discussion in this volume of the role of the CCH in shaping Mário Pinto de Andrade's work.
- 5 The CCH also played a key role in C.L.R. James's and Aimé Césaire's writings on the Caliban figure from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (Gonzalez Seligmann 2019, 73–74). For an in-depth study of Césaire's speech and experience at the CCH, see Frost and Lefevre Tavárez, "Tragedy of the Possible."
- 6 See, for example, Martínez, *The Youngest Revolution* and Clytus, *Black Man in Red Cuba*.
- 7 A list of all attendees can be found in OAS and Special Consultative Committee on Security SCCS, 1968.
- 8 In this way, Salkey's text participates in the geopolitical discursive links—detailed in Amanda Perry's contribution to this volume—used by Anglophone Caribbean governments to ally with Cuba in the 1970s.
- 9 For an in-depth reading of James's speech and participation at the CCH, see Colás, "Silence and Dialectics" and Gonzalez Seligmann, "Caliban, Why?."

- 10 The Jamaican government prevented several writers from attending the conference, suggesting that West Indian underrepresentation may have been partially beyond the control of CCH organizers (Perry).
- 11 After Carlos Moore described this event in *Castro, the Blacks, and Africa* (1989), Afro-Cuban writer Pedro Pérez Sarduy wrote an open letter to Moore, claiming that he overly dramatized the occurrence (Pérez-Sarduy 1990). Despite this controversy, it is well documented that those involved faced reprisals. Also, although Salkey did not document it, he likely participated in a “semi-secret meeting,” which took place after a showing of *María Antonia*, of Afro-Caribbean conference delegates and Black Cuban intellectuals who were not invited to participate in the CCH (Frost and Lefevre Tavárez 2020, 46).
- 12 I have argued for this interpretation of the film elsewhere (Mahler 2018).

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4 Sovereign Alliances: Reading the Romance between Cuba and the Anglophone Caribbean in the 1970s

Amanda T. Perry

Within the framework of the cultural Cold War, the romance between the Anglophone Caribbean and Cuba appears belated—occurring *after* many left-wing intellectuals in Western Europe and Latin America had already broken with the revolutionary state. During the 1960s, the Cuban Revolution enjoyed widespread popularity among radicals and progressives around the world, appearing at once as the Latin American equivalent to anticolonial movements in Africa and Asia, and as a socialist alternative to the Soviet Union, free from the historical baggage of Stalinism. The 1970s have a dourer reputation as a decade of Sovietization (Artaraz 2009; Gilman 2003; Rojas 2008). In the literary realm, they were associated with intensified censorship, particularly following the 1971 scandal over the arrest of Cuban poet Heberto Padilla. Padilla's imprisonment, and his confession to counter-revolutionary activities upon his release, unleashed a wave of criticism from intellectuals from Western Europe and Latin America, including Mario Vargas Llosa, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Carlos Fuentes, Marguerite Duras, Juan Rulfo, and Italo Calvino. Many would permanently distance themselves from Castro's regime. In the years that followed, previously prominent Cuban writers found themselves marginalized as ideologically deviant; others, like José Lezama Lima and Virgilio Piñera, were targeted as homosexuals. Jean Franco presents these events as rupturing the imagined link between the literary avant-garde and revolutionary vanguard (Franco 2002, 101), and Jorge Fornet argues that 1971 marked a larger transition within Cuba, from a period of expansion to contraction, effort to exhaustion, heroism to mediocrity (Fornet 2013).

It is striking, then, that the 1970s witnessed an explosion in cultural diplomacy and literary exchanges between Cuba and the Anglophone Caribbean. This dramatic increase followed in the wake of political developments, as Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago established diplomatic relations with Cuba in 1972, with the governments of Jamaica and Guyana pursuing high-profile alliances with Fidel

Castro's state in the years to follow. During the same period, writers, artists, and dance troupes embarked on cross-Caribbean tours, while the iconic Cuban publishing house and cultural institution Casa de las Américas launched major initiatives to translate Anglo-Caribbean writers. The climax of this relationship occurred in 1979, as the Grenada Revolution brought the Cuban state an even closer ally in the region. That year, Cuba played host to the arts festival Carifesta, importing an Anglo-Caribbean initiative designed to promote a multilingual, pan-Caribbean identity. Two months later, Grenadian Prime Minister Maurice Bishop joined Jamaica's Michael Manley and Guyana's Forbes Burnham at the Non-Aligned Summit in Havana.

I examine the mutual development of political and cultural exchanges in the 1970s, focusing on how these cross-Caribbean alliances sought to circumvent the polarizing discourses of the Cold War. Though the governments of Jamaica, Guyana, and Grenada pursued left-wing reforms during this period, they did not justify their relationship with Cuba primarily through a shared commitment to socialism. Rather, they focused on a regional drive toward anti-imperialism, articulated above all through the language of state sovereignty. These discourses rejected interpretations of the Cuban state as a Soviet puppet while demonstrating an uneasy relationship to black transnationalism, which threatened to reveal the fault lines within and across national bodies. Cuban cultural diplomacy adopted similar rhetoric, championing Caribbean sovereignty but remaining ambivalent toward celebrations of blackness. These dynamics are especially clear in the Anglo-Caribbean entanglements of Roberto Fernández Retamar, Cuban poet, essayist, and editor in chief of the journal Casa de las Américas, as well as the discourse surrounding the Cuban edition of Carifesta. This Anglo-Caribbean-Cuban alliance eventually foundered, however, as the United States dramatically enforced a Cold War reading of the region through the 1983 invasion of Grenada.

The Cuban-Caribbean Rapprochement and the Performance of Regional Sovereignty

When the governments of Barbados, Jamaica, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago announced their intentions to establish diplomatic relations with Cuba in October of 1972, it was a clear departure from earlier policies. After Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago became independent in 1962, followed by Barbados and Guyana in 1966, all four governments broadly aligned themselves with the West in Cold War geopolitics and demonstrated little interest in pursuing ties to Cuba. The Jamaican government furthermore actively repressed intellectual exchanges with the socialist state, confiscating Jamaican economist George Beckford's passport after a trip to Cuba in 1964, banning Cuban publications in

1967, and eventually requiring Jamaicans to secure permission from the Ministries of Home Affairs and External Affairs in order to visit the island (Lewis 1998, 112).

As a result, those cross-Caribbean intellectual exchanges that did take place in the 1960s tended to be routed through Europe. Anne Garland Mahler's contribution to this volume details the participation of a West Indian contingent in the 1968 Cultural Congress of Havana, unpacking Jamaican author Andrew Salkey's subtle critiques of Cuban race relations in his narrative *Havana Journal*. As Mahler aptly observes, Salkey's knowledge of Jamaica made him a more perceptive analyst of the Cuban situation; ironically, however, his very attendance was facilitated by his residence in London. It was there that Cuban writers Edmundo Desnoes and Pablo Armando Fernández met Salkey and other members of the Caribbean Artists' Movement and passed on the invitations, and it was from London that Salkey arranged his travel. Caribbean intellectuals based in Jamaica had a more difficult time attending. Salkey remarks that theatre practitioner Jill Binns, obliged to fly through Mexico, spent "four days in getting [to Cuba] from an island only ninety miles away," and implies that Orlando Patterson and George Lamming, both teaching at the University of the West Indies, never made it to the Congress at all because of barriers created by the Jamaican state (Salkey 1971, 209, 31).

Whereas political divisions had impeded intellectual exchanges in the 1960s, the thaw in these relations in the 1970s was first announced through cultural diplomacy. Though Eric Williams of Trinidad and Michael Manley of Jamaica had begun discussing increased diplomatic relations with Cuba in the 1970s, the main architect behind the 1972 agreement was ultimately Forbes Burnham of Guyana (Ramphal 2014, 129). In August of 1972, Guyana hosted the first Carifesta: a three-week celebration that promoted the Caribbean as a cohesive, multilingual cultural sphere, with delegations of artists from across the Caribbean basin and Latin America. The festival, as Ramaesh Bhagirat-Rivera argues, also served to generate prestige for Burnham's government, which maintained its grip on power through extensive electoral fraud (Bhagirat-Rivera 2018). Burnham invited Cuba to participate, and the state responded by sending a delegation that included its most celebrated poet, Nicolás Guillén, alongside the Conjunto Folklórico Nacional, the island's premiere folkloric dance troop. The Guyanese Prime Minister, in turn, visited the delegation twice during their stay (Portela 1972). Formal discussions to establish diplomatic relations were launched the following month at the Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement in Georgetown.

When all four independent Anglo-Caribbean states agreed to establish diplomatic relations with Cuba in October, they justified this decision using a discourse that was itself notably "non-aligned." The 1972 joint announcement contains no mention of socialism or communism, nor does it

invoke such contested terms as democracy. Instead, the announcement seeks to circumvent Cold War rhetoric altogether through the language of state sovereignty and regionalism. The declaration begins by identifying the signatories as “the *independent* English-speaking Caribbean States, exercising their *sovereign* right to enter into relations with any other *sovereign* state” (Ramphal 2014, 131). Establishing relations with Cuba is both an expression of this sovereignty and part of a project of “regional solidarity” that aims “to achieve meaningful and comprehensive economic co-operation amongst all Caribbean Countries” (2014, 131). By framing Cuba first and foremost as a fellow Caribbean nation rather than a socialist country, this formulation rejects Cold War divisions in favor of a regional imaginary. In a similar vein, a 1972 cabinet submission by Jamaica’s Michael Manley declared that diplomatic relations with Cuba would be consistent with “the posture [Jamaica] will maintain internationally as a Third World nation and non-aligned state” (Manley 1972, 3). He portrays such ties as part of a project of unity with other nations in the Global South, rejecting tutelage by either the U.S. or the USSR. The fact that this foreign policy required defying the United States was a risk that may have also held some appeal. By the early 1970s, critiques that Anglo-Caribbean states had only achieved “flag independence” were on the rise, featuring heavily in the 1968 Rodney Riots in Jamaica, the 1970 Black Power protests in Trinidad, and other radical movements throughout the region (Quinn 2014). In this context, establishing ties to Cuba served as evidence that Anglo-Caribbean states were, in fact, sovereign, and not neocolonial puppets themselves.

These states’ subsequent relationships with Cuba varied widely, with the governments of Jamaica and Guyana pursuing prominent alliances, Trinidad treading a wary middle ground, and Barbados refusing to allow a landed Cuban mission on the island until 1983. The Cuban state, faced with increased isolation in Latin America following the coup against Salvador Allende in Chile, began to leverage these ties in the mid-1970s. Determined to demonstrate that the Cuban Revolution still had allies, Fidel Castro hosted three official state visits by Anglo-Caribbean leaders between April and July 1975. Sovereignty remained the dominant term in visits that doubled as major propaganda events, receiving front page news coverage in Cuba each day and featuring mass rallies. Castro introduced Eric Williams as a staunch anti-colonialist who fought for regional independence and credited Forbes Burnham and Michael Manley for not having acquired “the bad habit—as did the Latin-American governments—of being dreadfully afraid of Yankee imperialism” (Castro 1975, 16).¹ Each of the visiting heads of state likewise called for more robust forms of independence, praising Cuba’s commitment to sovereignty and largely avoiding questions of socialism. In these rhetorical moves, one sees a version of the dynamic that Brian Meeks identifies among the Jamaican poor, whereby revolutionary Cuba

is celebrated for its boldness and defiance of the United States rather than for the details of its political system (Meeks 2012, 96–97).

The rhetoric of these visits furthermore elevated a shared commitment to anti-imperialist nation-states over another potential basis for regional solidarity: the presence of peoples of African descent. Indeed, black radical politics were consistently absorbed into the framework of sovereignty. Most obviously, the leaders of slave revolts were converted into the forefathers of independence, despite the fact that abolition occurred in the Anglophone Caribbean under the auspices of the British Empire in the 1830s, while decolonization did not take place until the 1960s. Burnham, while in Cuba, thus declared that Cuffy, the leader of a 1762 revolt, expressed “the universality of the teachings and precepts of Martí,” by undertaking “the first move toward our independence from colonial domination” (Burnham 1975, 209).² In forging a connection to José Martí, the celebrated martyr of Cuba’s War of Independence from 1895 to 1898, Burnham made Guyana legible within a regional narrative of anti-imperial revolt. In pairing a white Creole intellectual with an enslaved African, he also minimized the importance of racial divisions in the region’s colonial history.

Castro repeated a similar gesture during his visit to Jamaica in 1977, which coincided with Jamaica’s National Heroes Day. There, Castro declared, “Those men who in the past rebelled and gave their lives and blood for the freedom of slaves were also fighting for the independence of Jamaica” (Castro 1977).³ Castro’s statement is not only historically suspect; it also positions the fight to end slavery, a race-based form of exploitation, as one step toward the realization of the anti-imperialist nation-state. What gets lost in this vision is that independence does not guarantee an end to racial oppression within the national body. The rhetoric surrounding these political alliances in turn shaped the language of cultural diplomacy.

Reading Cuban Cultural Diplomacy: “Caliban” and Carifesta

These new political ties enabled an explosion of cross-Caribbean cultural exchanges in the 1970s, with the discourse surrounding these exchanges likewise focusing on regional sovereignty over race and avoiding the debates about censorship that dominated the cultural Cold War. The state visits of 1975 were directly accompanied by publishing efforts. A Spanish translation of Eric Williams’ *Capitalism and Slavery* was released by the Instituto Cubano del Libro on the first day of the Trinidadian Prime Minister’s visit, and the July-August 1975 edition of the journal *Casa de las Américas*, dedicated to Anglo-Caribbean writers and thinkers, made its connection to contemporary politics explicit by including speeches given by Castro and Burnham during the Guyanese

leader's April tour ("Pondrán ..." 1975). This special edition saw 42 Anglo-Caribbean writers and thinkers translated into Spanish, most of them for the first time, and it marked the beginning of a series of initiatives by Casa de las Américas to court Anglo-Caribbean writers.

Founded by the revolutionary government in 1959 as a cultural center and publishing house, Casa de las Américas' explicit goal was to foster the cultural unity of Spanish-speaking America. Through its eponymous magazine, annual prizes, and ambitious cultural programming, the institution was a key force behind the eruption of Latin American literature on the world stage in the 1960s. While Casa had occasionally published translations from Brazilian, Haitian, and French Caribbean writers in the 1960s, the organization had largely overlooked the Anglophone Caribbean before the birth of these new political ties, which facilitated increased traffic among intellectuals in both directions. Anglo-Caribbean writers began attending the Annual Meeting of Latin American Writers in Havana, and Casa modified the structure of annual literary prizes, until then restricted to texts in Spanish, to allow for Caribbean submissions in English. This expanded mandate fostered publications and catalyzed a steady stream of visitors to Havana to participate on prize juries and speak at conferences (Pereira 1985). Likewise, select Cuban writers and performers embarked on the equivalent of goodwill tours to the Anglophone Caribbean throughout the 1970s. These included the poet Nicolás Guillén, who was the head of Cuba's National Writer's Union (UNEAC) and was already known in the region for his poetry, especially his exploration of Afro-Cuban themes in the 1930s (Irish 1975; Perry 2020). The 1970s also saw the emergence of a new cultural broker: Roberto Fernández Retamar.

Retamar's new status in the Anglophone Caribbean had two sources. As the editor in chief of *Casa de las Américas*, he was at the center of emerging cross-Caribbean networks. Retamar was a presence at most major meetings of writers in Havana and was a key point of contact for visitors, developing personal friendships with Kamau Brathwaite and George Lamming, among others (Scott 2016, viii). He traveled to Barbados and Jamaica himself in 1974, and to Kingston for the second edition of Carifesta in 1976 ("Al pie de la letra" 1975, 224). In terms of his writing, Retamar's reputation was based less on his poetry than on his 1971 essay "Caliban." Both the reception of "Caliban" and Retamar's mediation of the Anglophone Caribbean for Cuban audiences demonstrate the focus on sovereignty as the key paradigm shaping these intellectual connections.

At one level, Retamar's essay "Caliban" acts as a manifesto championing cultural decolonization in Latin America. Retamar returns to the use of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* by Uruguayan essayist José Enrique Rodó, but he modifies Rodó's vision, insisting that the position of the Latin American intellectual is best represented not by

Ariel but Caliban. To make this move, Retamar draws on Caribbean writers, attributing the first identification with Caliban by a “Latin American and Caribbean writer” to George Lamming in *The Pleasures of Exile*, followed by Aimé Césaire’s *The Tempest* and Kamau Brathwaite’s *Islands* (Retamar 1995, 19).⁴ Retamar’s readings of these texts are brief, but they notably elide the ways in which these writers associate Caliban specifically with black peoples; Césaire poetically ties Caliban to Malcolm X, while Lamming most prominently uses *The Tempest* to frame his discussion of the Haitian Revolution. For Retamar, Caliban is a more pliable figure, employed to refer to a broad set of conditions of economic and cultural exploitation. Retamar’s recruitment of these writers into his intellectual genealogy and his use of a trope that was already familiar within Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean letters would nevertheless generate significant and enduring sympathy.

The essay was first translated into English as the main feature of a special issue of the *Massachusetts Review*, edited by the Puerto Rican Roberto Márquez. While writers from continental Latin America are present in the issue, Márquez further reinforces a Caribbean context for Retamar’s work. He begins his preface by citing Frantz Fanon and includes, in the same volume, poetry by Kamau Brathwaite, John La Rose, Andrew Salkey, Anthony McNeill, and René Depestre, alongside an article by George Beckford on Caribbean economic sovereignty. In 1976, Retamar’s essay was explicitly positioned as a Caribbean manifesto against cultural colonialism, as fragments of “Caliban” appeared in the multilingual anthology produced for Carifesta in Kingston, Jamaica, for which Retamar was a co-editor. In key ways, Retamar’s work thus came into English *through* and *alongside* the Caribbean, a mediation that shaped its reception as a quintessentially postcolonial text by critics like Edward Said. While Said mentions Rodó in passing as a Latin American antecedent, he examines Retamar above all alongside Césaire and Lamming, stressing his participation in a “profoundly important ideological debate at the heart of the cultural effort to decolonize” that continues “long after the political establishment of independent nation-states” (Said 2012, 213).

That said, Retamar’s essay has another key interpretive context; it is also a response to the 1971 Padilla affair (Luis 2016). The scandal over Padilla’s arrest hit Casa de las Américas especially hard, triggering open ruptures with members of the journal’s editorial committee, such that the committee was abolished and Retamar was appointed the sole credited editor. The essay was first published in the months following the scandal, and its allusions to the contemporary “debate” about Cuba are accompanied by denunciations of the politics of specific Latin American intellectuals who had criticized the state’s actions. As Nadia Lie argues, Retamar also uses multiple comparisons between Caliban and Fidel Castro to reinforce Castro’s position during the controversy, as the Cuban

leader attacked opposition to the revolution's increasingly repressive cultural policies as a form of neocolonialism, expressed by bourgeois intellectuals who did not understand the revolutionary process (Lié 1997, 190–194). The problem that Retamar frames as a struggle between Eurocentrism and decolonization could be viewed through a very different lens, where the key question is whether intellectuals should have the right to criticize the Cuban state in their works. According to his harshest critics, “Caliban” is less an anti-imperialist manifesto than an apologia for the repression of dissident writers (Castells 1995; Ortíz 1999).

This context did not follow the essay into any of its Caribbean-mediated English translations. Rather, Retamar's embrace as an anti-imperialist proved representative of a situation where Anglo-Caribbean thinkers diminished the significance of debates concerning freedom of expression, so inflammatory within the cultural Cold War, when they approached Cuba. The Jamaica-based journal *Caribbean Quarterly* is a case in point. In dialogue with *Casa de las Américas*, the journal released its own special issue on Cuba in 1975, including translations of Retamar's poetry among the selections. As editor, Rex Nettleford stresses a mutual rapprochement with Cuba rooted in recent political developments and regional histories of exchange. Sidelineing the question of socialism, he asserts that Anglo-Caribbean observers of the revolution had been impressed “with the successful defiance of neo-colonialism and with the attempts by Cubans to develop a society on the basis of its own internal dynamics” (Nettleford 1975, 5). When divisions in the Cuban literary scene are mentioned in the volume, the issue of censorship is minimized. Jamaican professor J.R. Pereira glosses the Padilla affair, but he describes subsequent developments in the literary scene as involving “the exposure of essentially marginal and counter-revolutionary writers,” and asserts that, overall, “the writer operates freely” (Pereira 1975, 71). Indeed, he stresses state support for the arts, listing the cultural institutions founded by the revolutionary state and declaring that “such a situation can hardly be regarded as oppressive to the writer” (1975, 63). The state thus appears less as censor than as benefactor, contributing to what one might call the sovereignty of the country's cultural scene through extensive material support.

Retamar's mediation of the Anglophone Caribbean for Cuban and Latin American audiences in his own preface to the 1975 edition of *Casa de las Américas* is likewise telling. Though signaling Cuba's special status as a socialist state, Retamar emphasizes the region's shared history of colonial exploitation and anti-imperial resistance. He expresses hesitation, however, about versions of this resistance rooted in the vindication of blackness. When he acknowledges that celebrations of African heritage have been important in anticolonial movements, his specific example—Kwame N'Krumah's inclusion of Marcus Garvey's black star on the flag of Ghana—channels a transnational vision of repatriation

into the framework of the anti-imperial state. Retamar then forcefully condemns the use of race-based politics by “bloody tyrants in Haiti or neocolonialist puppets in Africa,” who, he alleges, “cover their crimes with the mask of a so-called negritude that would dispense with the class struggle” (Retamar 1975, 9).⁵ The language of class struggle may call to mind Marx or Lenin, but Retamar goes on to quote Sekou Touré, Ho Chi Minh, and José Martí, citing cases where each foregrounds the unity of the oppressed across racial lines. By invoking an African, Asian, and Cuban leader, Retamar conjures his own version of the Tricontinental, enacting Third World internationalism at the level of rhetoric. He also distracts from the fact that Cuba’s leadership following the Revolution had, at its highest ranks, remained disproportionately white.

In the summer of 1979, the cultural diplomacy of the 1970s would reach new heights when Cuba hosted the third Carifesta, importing an Anglo-Caribbean project and, by most accounts, doing it better. Based in Havana and Santiago de Cuba with additional events in Matanzas, Carifesta 79 was heralded as the best attended and most well-organized of the festivals, featuring 1545 artists from 28 countries alongside 500 participating Cuban artists (Sarusky 1981). In Santiago, Afro-Cuban culture was on especially prominent display, as Carifesta coincided with a carnival, and the most celebrated Afro-Cuban involved in the 1959 Revolution, Juan Almeida Bosque, presided over a crowd of 15,000 for the festival’s opening. Christabelle Peters analyzes Carifesta 79 as enabling a transition to a Caribbean cultural identity within Cuba, an argument that may be an overstatement given the discourses of national exceptionalism and of Latin American-ness that Rafael Rojas identifies on the island (Peters 2012, 150–152; Rojas 2008, 95–96). Nevertheless, insofar as such a shift took place, it was a direct consequence of specific alliances with Anglo-Caribbean states and the cultural diplomacy that accompanied them.

The speech given by Armando Hart, then Minister of Culture, during Carifesta’s opening ceremonies in Havana, demonstrates the complex ways in which this Caribbean identity was affirmed. Hart defines the Caribbean expansively, including cultural pockets as far off as Peru, and explicitly recognizes African influences as a shared feature of the region, noting that they have been too frequently underestimated or disrespected. At the same time, his discussion of Caribbean history minimizes racial divisions in favor of a shared history of resistance, one in which “the great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren of the Western European conquistadors ... challenged the reactionary ideology of their ancestors, integrated [*se mezclaron*] and joined the struggle for the freedom of the Amerindians and the Africans brought as slaves” (Hart 1979).⁶ This rather suspect reading of Caribbean history neglects the fact that the struggle for sovereignty does not eliminate racial or cultural difference, and that white creoles have been frequently at least as

invested in maintaining white supremacy as their European-born ancestors. At the height of Cuban-Caribbean cultural diplomacy, blackness would remain subordinated to the multiracial, anti-imperial nation-state as the primary framework for identification, and socialism, once more, would hardly be mentioned.

The U.S. Invasion of Grenada and the Decline of Sovereign Imaginaries

When the Grenada Revolution occurred in 1979, the People's Revolutionary Government of Grenada entered into a pattern of relations with Cuba that echoed, on an expanded scale, those that had been forged by Jamaica and Guyana. A month after the ousting of dictator Eric Gairy in a near-bloodless coup, the new Prime Minister, Maurice Bishop, vociferously defended the sovereignty of the new government—specifically by attacking U.S. efforts to prohibit a closer relation to Cuba. In the April speech “In Nobody’s Backyard,” Bishop thus insisted that “no one, no matter how mighty and powerful they are, will be permitted to dictate to the government and people of Grenada ... what kind of relations we must have with other countries” (Bishop 1983, 108). A few months later, in September, Bishop joined Manley and Burnham for the 1979 Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in Havana. There, all three leaders reaffirmed their commitment to a sovereign future for the Caribbean—while insisting that Cuba itself was a sovereign country. Josep Tito of Yugoslavia, among others, had accused Castro of undermining the Non-Aligned movement by bringing it too close to the USSR. All three Anglo-Caribbean leaders rebutted these accusations, rejecting Cold War interpretations of Cuba as a Soviet satellite (Addresses 1980). After all, their alliance with Cuba was an indication of their own sovereignty and commitment to regional solidarity, not a pledge of allegiance to Moscow.

These Cold War logics could not simply be brushed aside, however, and the argument that ties to Cuba were an indication of sovereignty could be reversed. In Jamaica, the political opposition accused the Cuban state of having its own imperial designs in the Caribbean, and Manley returned from the Summit faced with calls to expel the Cuban ambassador for purportedly threatening to intervene in domestic affairs (Perkins 1979). Months later, Manley was defeated at the polls, and the new Jamaican government broke off relations with Castro’s state early in its term (Erisman 1995, 210). In the years to follow, the U.S. government under Ronald Reagan would use ties to Cuba as evidence that Grenada had become a Soviet puppet.

The People’s Revolutionary Government of Grenada established close symbolic links to Cuba: Castro’s description of the Grenada Revolution as a “big revolution in a small country” was reprinted on billboards

throughout the island, while Bishop reveled in the description of the overthrow of Gairy as a “successful Moncada” (Addresses 1980, 232; Puri 2014, 2). Cuba also provided substantive material assistance, including in the construction of a new international airport (Puri 2014, 177). Then, in October of 1983, the Grenada Revolution imploded. A split in the leadership between Bishop and other members of his party’s Central Committee escalated into an armed conflict, following which Bishop and several other government ministers were summarily executed. The Central Committee placed the entire island under strict curfew. A few days later, on October 25, 1983, over 7,000 U.S. troops invaded the island of 91,000 inhabitants.

Ronald Reagan’s televised speech contextualizing the invasion, delivered on October 27, weaponized Cuban support for Grenada to justify the military intervention. At the level of rhetoric, Reagan repeatedly curtailed the significance of Grenada’s sovereignty, presenting the revolution itself as follows: “Maurice Bishop, a protege of Fidel Castro, staged a military coup and overthrew the government which had been elected under the constitution left to the people by the British” (Reagan, 1983). While framing Bishop as a potential puppet, Reagan presented Grenada’s postcolonial government as needing to be constrained by a system designed by a former colonial power. He characterized Cuban assistance in constructing the international airport as especially damning, as the airport “looked suspiciously suitable for military aircraft, including Soviet-built long-range bombers.” Reagan then framed the Central Committee members that had Bishop executed as even more fanatically pro-Cuba, ultimately declaring that Grenada was quite simply “a Soviet-Cuban colony, being readied as a major military bastion to export terror and undermine democracy.” The justification that was initially cited for the invasion—ensuring the safety of eight hundred U.S. medical students on the island—hardly made an appearance in a speech that instead converted the invasion of Grenada into a major U.S. victory in the Cold War.

With the U.S. invasion of Grenada, the relationship between Cuba and the Anglophone Caribbean radically shifted. At the level of diplomacy, Castro’s government lost its most visible remaining ally, as connections with Guyana had also begun to cool (Premdas 1982). Most importantly, the invasion revealed that Anglo-Caribbean states could be subjected to the same tactics of regime change that the United States had long deployed within Latin America and that postcolonial sovereignty within the shadow of a superpower had clear limits that could be brutally enforced. The Anglo-Caribbean romance with Cuba may have foregrounded anti-imperial sovereignty, but the U.S. was ultimately in a position to impose a Cold War reading of the region.

The end of these political alliances would not lead to the demise of cultural connections. *Carifesta*’s Cuban edition was accompanied by the

establishment of permanent cultural institutions, including the Centro de Estudios del Caribe, founded under the auspices of Casa de las Américas, which launched the trilingual journal *Anales del Caribe* in 1981. The murdered Maurice Bishop, meanwhile, was transformed into a martyr within Cuba, with prizes and buildings named after him (Puri 2014, 189). In 1984, the Fiesta del Fuego in Santiago de Cuba was held in his honor; this event, timed to coincide with the city's July carnival, went on to spotlight a Caribbean country every year, being held with far more consistency than Carifesta itself.

That such ties should survive the death of the political alliances that promoted them lends credence to this cultural diplomacy's self-presentation as part of a regional project. Any effort to examine the cultural Cold War in the Global South must reckon with Cuba, as a regional cultural powerhouse and as a site where discourses of anti-imperialism and socialism were deeply entangled. What is most striking about Cuba's connections with the Anglophone Caribbean, however, is the extent to which the rhetoric surrounding them sought to avoid Cold War binaries. Both political actors and intellectuals stressed their shared commitment to Caribbean sovereignty, and staunch criticism of the United States as a hemispheric imperial power was accompanied by little corresponding praise of the Soviet Union. On the political front, the Cuban-Anglo-Caribbean alliance of the 1970s was severed by a superpower willing to disregard the principles of state sovereignty and unwilling to accept Non-Alignment as an option in the Americas. Culturally, by fostering pan-Caribbean cultural projects, these allegiances created mechanisms of exchange that endure to this day.

Notes

- 1 Castro's other speeches from these visits are easily available online, while the speeches of Burnham, Manley, and Williams were reprinted in the Cuban newspaper *Granma*.
- 2 "En mi patria, Guyana, la universalidad de las enseñanzas y preceptos de Martí tuvo una expresión anterior cuando, en 1762, Cuffy, un esclavo para quien los anhelos de libertad y dignidad humana fueron inextinguibles, emprendió la primera acción por nuestra independencia de la dominación colonial."
- 3 "Aquellos hombres que en los tiempos pasados se rebelaron y dieron su vida y su sangre por la libertad de los esclavos, estaban luchando también por la independencia de Jamaica."
- 4 Retamar's essay also makes glancing allusions to Franz Fanon, Jacques Roumain, CLR James, Edna Manley, and Amy and Marcus Garvey.
- 5 The editorial appears in both Spanish and English.
- 6 "los bisnietos y tatarnietos de los conquistadores eurooccidentales [que] se enfrentaron a la ideología reaccionaria de sus antecesores, se mezclaron y se unieron a la lucha por la libertad de los indios americanos y de los africanos traídos como esclavos."

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5 “We Understand Each Other”: Writers from Eastern Europe and the Global South at the International Writing Program (1970s)¹

Szabolcs László

“While writers in the East have been fighting the prejudice of ideology, writers in the West have been fighting the dictatorship of the market, and writers in the Third World have been struggling with material insufficiencies, Paul Engle has created a modern utopia” (Lustig 1973). This is the concise introduction given to the International Writing Program (IWP) and its founder by the émigré Czech writer and former participant in the program, Arnošt Lustig, in a 1973 promotional text. What was implied in the description is that—through this unique residency program—writers could meet in an ideal place defined by the very absence of the emblematic (and stereotypical) woes assigned to the geopolitical arena they came from. Moreover, the IWP offered “international unity” and a “oneness of feeling experienced by people of talent and good-will gathered in a small university town in Iowa,” resulting in an “explosion of beauty and friendship” (Hall 1970). In other words, there was a residency program in the heart of the U.S. where writers from across the globe could interact both as individual artists and also as representatives of different “worlds.” However, attempts at building utopias are inescapably determined by their historical context—and the IWP was duly framed by Cold War American cultural diplomacy. Furthermore, they are experienced by people who—like the writers from Eastern Europe and the Global South did in Iowa City—create their own interpretations about friendship, unity, and otherness in a geopolitically divided world.

Despite the overarching context of the Cold War, throughout the 1970s notions of “global community” and “shared humanity” became frequent both in international forums like the UN and also in American public discourse. Regarded as the decade of incipient globalization, it witnessed the proliferation of ideas and projects which stressed the “common destiny and identity of humankind,” supposedly superseding

the more traditional, geopolitical notions of national security and national interests (Iriye 2013, 25). The concept of “the global” became “crucial for considering international politics and economics” (Sluga 2010, 233). For instance, in a 1973 memorandum encouraging “cross-cultural communication,” Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs John Richardson Jr. defined this globalizing intention in the following way:

The goal would be to increase support here and abroad for purposeful efforts of official and unofficial agencies to reduce cultural, ideological and other barriers to human communication, to build habits and mechanisms of intercultural cooperation, [and] to strengthen trends toward world community.

(Richardson 1973)

Yet, the decade was dominated by a paradox: the perception of simultaneous interdependence and political fragmentation—the unity implied by the notion of “human” vs. the divisions implied by “inter-cultural.” Besides the geopolitical rivalry of the Cold War, there was a growing tension between the “enabling embrace of the useful fiction of a world community,” on the one hand, and the emerging movements of identity politics on the other (Sluga 2010, 234). In other words, the rhetoric of “world community” was never detached from geopolitical agendas and the power dynamics or governmental interests that ran through the various areas of public policy, science, and the arts.

The globalizing imagination of the 1970s in the West was preceded by internationalist visions of unity and solidarity in the Soviet bloc—by several decades. For the Bolsheviks, the success of the 1917 revolution “presumably created a historical bridge linking together the destinies of the proletariat in the colonies with those of the new proletariat state in the Soviet Union” (Matusevich 2008, 59). Soviet rhetoric of color-blind internationalism was backed up by the creation of politically oriented educational institutions, like the International Lenin School or the Communist University of the Toilers of the East in the interwar years and the establishment of the Patrice Lumumba Peoples’ Friendship University in 1960. Similar top-down efforts were made in the satellite countries of the Soviet bloc to promote a sense of global solidarity with the non-Western world and to start extensive programs for cultural exchanges and for the training of foreign students at Eastern European universities. However, such calls for internationalism also implied strong divisions defined by class, ideology, and the incommensurable distinctiveness of “socio-economic systems.”

The IWP was created in 1967 within the intertwined contexts of such competing internationalisms during the Cold War. Its institutional identity reproduced the larger paradox of unity and otherness dominating the

decade. Moreover, its *raison d'être* was the geopolitical agenda of Cold War cultural diplomacy, aiming to win the hearts and minds of international elites traveling to and living in the U.S. The examination of the IWP, through a focus on participants from Eastern Europe and the Global South, provides a micro-history of how a particular implementation of “world community” was experienced and interpreted by those invited to be its members. What this case study can show is that the meeting of individuals and the encounter of “worlds” in such rhetorically charged cultural sites is pronouncedly different from what the designers of “utopias” envisioned. The lived and personal solidarities developed at the IWP managed to subvert both the transformative intentions of their American hosts and the ideological limitations of Soviet-type internationalism—turning the Program into a site of contest. Finally, the analysis intends to emphasize that focusing on the agency of those participating in projects of geopolitical competition during the Cold War is also a call to reclaim the hearts and minds that were addressed but not conquered.

The International Writing Program and the “Community of Imagination”

The IWP, affiliated with the University of Iowa, was founded by the American poet Paul Engle and the Chinese novelist Hualing Nieh in 1967 as an internationally oriented counterpart to the Iowa Writers' Workshop, also run by Engle until 1965.² The conception of the IWP can be understood as an effort to give a fuller and more stable institutional framing to an already budding international project which, until then, had existed only as an addition to the Workshop (Bennett 2015). Stepping down as the head of the creative writing program, Engle decided to dedicate all of his energies and promotional creativity to running the IWP. This project represented the next level in international cultural relations, since it was not envisioned as a degree program for foreign writers-in-training, but as a literary residency for professional writers from around the world.

Like other projects of U.S. cultural diplomacy during the Cold War, the IWP received financial support in the form of grants for travel and living costs and core grants for the upkeep of the program from a combination of public and private sources, the main ones being the USIA, the State Department, the Institute of International Education (IIE), and the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations. National and regional corporations, like Deere & Company, Exxon Corp., and American Republic Insurance, also contributed significantly to the budget of the IWP. Its mission was to bring together writers from all over the world with the purpose of “cultural exchange” by introducing them to U.S. social and cultural life; to offer them optimal conditions for writing; and to organize public readings of their works and translations done at the workshop. Since 1967, the IWP has

hosted around 1,500 writers and journalists from more than 150 countries (IWP 2017). Although these included some writers from Western Europe, the majority of the participants came from Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, Africa, and South America (Table 5.1).

The idea of the IWP fit well into the larger framework of American cultural diplomacy. It was emblematic in targeting elites, yet its focus on foreign writers was entirely unique in the U.S. and the Western world. The program was also special in that it covered all expenses and provided an immersive experience for the participants, offering shared accommodation in Iowa City, generous stipends (\$500 a month), complimentary book packages, and even translation deals. The writers were housed at Mayflower Hall, a large university dormitory, and interacted frequently through scheduled events or informally. Furthermore, the Program organized frequent trips for the participants to meet the private sponsors, touring the headquarters of significant corporations like Deere & Company in Moline, IL; the Johnson Foundation at Wingspread in Racine, WI; EMC Insurance Co. in Des Moines, IA; etc., meeting the respective CEOs. Participating writers were also expected to give several public lectures, attend translation seminars, give interviews to the local and national press, and attend the numerous social gatherings organized by the Engles.

The institutional identity of the IWP, and one of the key elements in the promotional language developed for fundraising, was based on the claim that it was a globally unique program—and on the stronger assertion that it represented an “innovation in international activities” (IWP 1979). Engle defined it as a utopia of peace, communication, and friendship realized through the mediation of literature: “a melting-pot program of creative sharing” and an “international community of the imagination” (Hall 1970). Engle repeatedly expressed in interviews and articles his belief that poetry is “especially suited to the pursuit of peace and understanding in a turbulent world” and that “translation is part of the world’s survival” because “people translating each other are not killing each other” (Engle and Nieh 1976). In a cover letter written for an application to the Rockefeller Foundation in 1974, Engle described the IWP through the following historical comparison:

This Program represents, in my mind, such a congenial environment as the Renaissance humanists found when they went from one country to another, always finding a friendly group, always communicating through the common Latin language, translating each other’s work, finding a person’s mind more important than his nationality. This is certainly true here, where Koreans meet Hungarians, Nigerians meet Chinese, Brazilians meet Indonesians, all respectful of each other’s talents. We are the only such place in this world, which needs our sort of understanding so badly.

(Engle 1974)

Table 5.1 "International Writing Program participants 1967–1990 – numbers by regions and countries." Courtesy of University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, Iowa

Asia	Eastern Europe	Central and South America	Africa	Western Europe					
Taiwan	28	Poland	30	Argentina	25	Nigeria	14	Greece	11
Indonesia	26	Romania	25	Brazil	21	South Africa	13	Finland	10
India	25	Hungary	21	Mexico	14	Egypt	8	France	10
Philippines	25	Yugoslavia	15	Colombia	11	Uganda	6	Ireland	9
China	23	Bulgaria	9	Chile	7	Ghana	6	Spain	8
Israel	23	GDR*	7	Peru	5	Cameroon	3	FRG**	7
Japan	22	Czechoslovakia	6	Venezuela	4	Kenya	3	Netherlands	6
South Korea	15	USSR	6	Costa Rica	4	Malawi	2	UK	4
Hong Kong	12								
Singapore	9								
Turkey	6								
Iran	5								

Notes:

* German Democratic Republic (Deutsche Demokratische Republik).

** Federal Republic of Germany (Bundesrepublik Deutschland).

In essence, Engle implied nothing less than that funding the IWP would be equal to contributing to the eventual realization of world peace.

Yet, given Engle's efforts to secure private and state funding and embed the IWP in the American cultural diplomacy framework, it is more accurate to see his globalist rhetoric as an example of the "useful fiction of a world community" (Sluga 2010, 234). Specifically, Engle's commitment to globalism was of a competitive kind, devised as a brand identity for an unmistakably American project within the context of geopolitical rivalry. In a 1978 promotional package prepared for potential corporate and private donors, the contrast with the Cold War "other" was made explicit: "Only the Soviet Union brings writers from many countries, but it places them in a tightly structured environment where information is directed and controlled. Writers who have been both to Moscow and to Iowa City much prefer the IWP" (IWP 1978). Engle further lamented that "in too many countries the writer is an endangered species, often punished with prison, internal exile, or harsh labor for writing views, or even in styles, resented by the ruling party" (Engle 1987, xxv). In other words, despite Engle's belief in the transcending power of poetry and translation, the utopian "community of imagination" could only be realized in the U.S. where, according to the promotional narrative, such tight control and oppression was absent.

Crafting an appealing discourse, Engle was increasingly successful in securing state and private sponsorship for the IWP. While the Program had 18 participants in 1967 and a total budget of around \$160,000 in the first few years, the number of guest writers rose to 36 by 1978 and the budget quadrupled (reaching \$684,496 that year). The monthly stipend for participants also increased from \$500 to \$1200 by the 1980s. The year 1973 seems to have been a turning point, with fundraising passing the one-million-dollar mark due to a \$100,000 grant from the Ford Foundation (Rindels 1973). The official stamp of approval from the State Department came in the form of a "Tribute of Appreciation,"³ awarded in the same year by Assistant Secretary of State John Richardson Jr. (IWP 1973).

Although the idea and design of the IWP did not originate in Washington nor in any of the foundation centers—since it was envisioned and implemented locally by Paul Engle—the entire identity of the Program was geared towards echoing the internationalist line of American cultural diplomacy efforts at the time, voiced by figures like Richardson. Ideology and financial motivations closely intertwined as Engle subscribed to this version of American exceptionalism that private and state donors responded to and generously supported. However, a closer analysis reveals that the implementation of the project did not necessarily correspond to the discourse which framed it. Although clearly seeing the IWP as a vehicle of U.S. cultural diplomacy, the participating writers, coming from all over the world, also perceived and experienced their involvement as transcending and subverting the given ideological frames.

Reaching into Different Worlds: Global Encounters at the IWP

The various accounts of participants on their experience in Iowa City during the Cold War period indicate that the IWP did indeed become a hub for global encounters. In one sense, the residency program acquired an air of universality, where artists and intellectuals met and interacted as autonomous individuals in isolation and protection from the existential or financial difficulties of the outside world—capitalist or communist. In another sense, the IWP was simultaneously a forum for intercultural meetings, a setting for the symbolic interactions of (self-identified or externally prescribed) representatives of geopolitical regions and competing worldviews. Primarily, and according to the U.S. cultural diplomacy agenda, participants from Eastern Europe and the Global South were supposed to encounter the so-called First World as represented by America and Americans. Yet the IWP also offered the opportunity for different writers from the Soviet bloc to observe (and judge) each other in a significantly different setting than they were accustomed to. They could likewise encounter writers coming from “developing countries,” who, in their turn, would meet and interact with their “fellow” non-Westerners from the wider post-colonial world. The residency in Iowa City served as a site where novelists and poets from around the world could relate to each other through their shared professional identity as being the same, yet at the same time reflect on the implications of their “otherness”—framed by the Cold War and mediated through the English language.

The Ugandan-born literary critic and novelist Peter Nazareth,⁴ participant in 1973–1974 and an advisor to the Program since 1977, described the professional and intellectual kinship that formed the basis for the IWP community each year:

Here we were, writers from all over the world. We did not have to explain why we were writers or why writing was important. We were living in a small city in which, say, one in ten people claimed to be a writer. So we could discuss technical or ideological problems having to do with writing.

(Nazareth 1987)

Indian poet Shrikant Varma,⁵ participant in 1970–1971, echoed Engle’s emphasis on the transcending potential of literature and the utopian implications of the Program, while also reflecting on the simultaneity of the universal and the intercultural experience:

The Program taught us that every nation has much to offer—by way of food, by way of thought, by way of new insights into hearts and

minds. It also taught us to transcend ideology. Politics and ideology may divide the world, but in Iowa City ideological conflicts often evoked warmth among writers. The IWP brings about a meeting of minds, a meeting of nations, a meeting of cultures.

(IWP 1988, 34)

Hungarian poet Ottó Orbán⁶ had similar impressions. He gave voice to them, quite candidly, in the official travel report he submitted to the Institute of Cultural Relations upon returning to Hungary in 1977:

My entire residency can be characterized as one long and engaged conversation about mankind, society, the future, America, Hungary, the world, and the many “worlds” to be found in our world; in other words, about everything that connects and separates us, people who have such different backgrounds and yet such similar lives in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

(Orbán 1977)

Another Hungarian poet, Ágnes Nemes Nagy⁷ kept a detailed diary throughout her residency in 1979 and at the end of it described her newfound understanding of the global experience she had through being part of the IWP community: “I want to keep on talking to them, to reach into different worlds through them. It’s amazing how much I’ve learned here. I’ve learned to transcend my Europeaness” (Nemes Nagy 1993, 67). Later, in a letter to Engle she wrote: “We have received from you, through the program, impressions of the globe, which is very useful for our European points of view. Thanks for the new continent (one continent? Five!)” (Engle 1987, xxii).

One of the best indicators for the nature and the effectiveness of the interactions that took place at the IWP is the abundance of translations that came out of the residency program throughout the years. Due to Engle’s support for the translations project, the IWP became the production base for world anthologies, like *Writing from the World* (1976) and *The World Comes to Iowa* (1987). It also launched translation volumes for some leading contemporary Eastern European poets, like the Romanian Nichita Stănescu and the Hungarian Ágnes Nemes Nagy (Stănescu 1975; Nemes Nagy 1980). Furthermore, the translation workshop initiated the work on translating classics, like the Romantic poetry of Mihai Eminescu and Cyprian Kamil Norwid. Famously, Engle and Hualing Nieh translated and published the poems of Chairman Mao Zedong in 1973 (Engle and Nieh 1973). Yet translations happened in the direction of other languages as well. For example, the works of Peter Nazareth have been translated into Hungarian due to the mediation of former IWP participants and into Serbian by the noted novelist David Albahari (Nazareth 1984). It was in Iowa City that Hungarian poet

Ágnes Gergely discovered Nigerian poetry, translating and editing the first anthology in Hungarian. Furthermore, she translated Christopher Okigbo's book of poetry and wrote a monograph dedicated to his life and writings (Gergely 1977; Gergely 1986; Okigbo 1989). Granted, in most cases the target or the source language for these translations was English, yet even so, the encounters at the IWP opened up several new avenues for trans-continental literary communication.

However, despite the authenticity of encounters and the value of translations, there was still a gap between the complexity of individual and intercultural interactions happening at the Program, and the promotional discourse that defined the identity of the IWP. The real community that coalesced each year in Iowa City both matched and surpassed the supposedly U.S.-oriented "community of imagination" that Engle sold to the State Department and to sponsoring corporations. The transcending nature of professional preoccupations with literature notwithstanding, questions of power and differences in worldview have placed their mark on the writers' experiences.

"Let Them Feel Superior": Hosts and Guests

The intercultural meeting of "worlds" and "continents" against a Cold War backdrop also produced reactions to the dichotomies, hierarchies, and solidarities of the wider geopolitical arena. The various accounts of the participants reveal that the logic of these power dynamics manifested itself in subtle and not-so-subtle ways in several episodes of the IWP residency. On one level, a clearly sensible dichotomy emerged between hosts and guests, repeatedly translating into a hierarchical relation in which writers from both Eastern Europe and the Global South felt symbolically, but also financially, subordinated to and dependent on the American organizers.

In the promotional discourse developed for the IWP, the image of the guests—the "others" of this Cold War dichotomy—was constructed in a manner that reveals their hierarchical positioning and objectification by the U.S. hosts. The participant writers were presented as refugees escaping a deeply troubled world, both victims of tyrannical regimes and bellicose nationals, tainted by tyranny, who needed to be pacified. In his fundraising letters and proposals, Engle painted an anthropologically simple picture of the participating writers as empty vessels for knowledge about and experience of America (Engle 1987, xxviii). Furthermore, once they returned home, the participants were expected to become "cultural ambassadors": vehicles for and conveyors of information on American life and culture—echoing a widely used concept of the time: wrapping up information in a person (Kramer 2009, 778). IWP guests were also viewed as the symbolic representatives of the non-American world, the impersonal flagbearers of their national literatures, and thus

valued primarily for their iconic nature. They brought their token international identities and the much-coveted proof of diversity and cosmopolitanism needed for the confirmation of Engle's internationalist project and for cementing the prestige of the Program.

This hierarchical experience was essentially a structural and impersonal effect, and not the result of personal, direct animosity—proven by the fact that nearly all of the participants were genuinely grateful to their hosts and some became lifelong friends with the Engles. The frustration and critical remarks of the writers were directed against formal and ritualized publicity events they were asked to attend, like cocktail parties and fundraising dinners with local businessmen and politicians, where they were regularly invited to give speeches, to recite their poetry, and even sing some of their national folk songs.

The Hungarian poet Nemes Nagy recalls such an episode when she was asked to perform in front of a dinner crowd, an experience that was traumatizing for her. While declining the invitation to sing, she still felt obliged to act as a representative of Hungarian literature for the international and American audience, and decided to recite one of Sándor Petőfi's poems, only to mix up several lines in the stanza due to her nervousness. Another Hungarian writer, Imre Szász⁸ also reflects critically on the subordinated position of guests when describing how the CEO of Deere & Company, William A. Hewitt, hosted a dinner as if "holding court like Emperor Franz Joseph must have done" (Szász 1973, 121). In fact, many of the writers were critical of the trip to the Deere & Company headquarters, feeling insulted by what they saw as a blatant attempt at American propaganda. Szász ends his description of the trip by recording a gesture which for him summed up the implicit infantilization of the guests: upon leaving the Deere factory, all the IWP writers received complimentary gifts courtesy of the host company—small John Deere toy tractors.

Other participants addressed the question of power dynamics between guests and hosts in a more direct way. For example, Hungarian writer Ágnes Gergely⁹ wrote a fictionalized account of her experiences at the IWP in a novel entitled *The Chicago Version*. In one episode, the fictional equivalent of the Program's director asked the writers to stand in a line and handed out three dollars to each of them—as it later turned out, to cover the entry fee for a tourist site they were to visit. The protagonist of the novel was, however, outraged by the gesture and a fellow guest writer from Nigeria attempted to calm her down:

If they want to feel superior, let them feel superior. If they offer money, we must take the money and thank them, better yet, we should praise them for it. America is a young continent, proud of its fortune, its big heart, its art collection, and it is proud to be the sponsor of the world. And in return, they expect you to do as they wish.

(Gergely 1976, 45)

Their shared position of non-American “others,” as projected onto them by the IWP rhetoric, and their similar feelings of irritation regarding the IWP practice, sensitized the guest writers to observe and to construct for themselves deeper—historical and geopolitical—similarities among the various non-Western contexts that were represented in their small global community in Iowa City. Such commonalities revealed themselves during discussions about the histories of colonial and political domination by great powers and about the vulnerability of small states caught up in geopolitical struggles. Yet they were more readily recognized by comparing their own contemporary experiences resulting from the prolonged and socio-economically crippling effects of wars and revolutions or the persecution of intellectuals and artists under authoritarian regimes. Consequently, writers from Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America felt that they were members of a community defined by a specific historical experience and cultural memory—the features of which separated them from their host American society, perceived as affluent, self-centered, and domineering.

The notion of solidarity and similarity among countries of the “Second” and the “Third World” was not a novelty for Eastern European writers, since it functioned as one of the main elements in the ideological discourse of communist states since the late 1950s. Directed especially at the youth, such a discourse encouraged people in the Soviet bloc to “perceive themselves as members of a transnational army of progress and revolution” in a “new era of the global struggle between imperialism and socialism,” between Western capitalist states and all the non-Western nations (Mark and Apor 2015, 860). Yet this idea of global solidarity was premised on minimal and heavily curated contact between the actual people who were targeted by such mobilization strategies so that the message could be more easily accommodated to domestic political intentions. Moreover, there was always an implied temporal gap when comparing the histories of East European countries (e.g. the nineteenth-century Hungarian revolution against Habsburg rule) and the current anti-colonial struggles of the Global South (like the war in Vietnam, etc.). This “developmental” distancing of the two contexts, while rooted in the inherent Eurocentrism of the Soviet project, was used by communist authorities to consciously downplay the relevance of anti-colonial struggles and revolutionary fervor to the consolidated societies of Eastern Europe.

What writers from the “Second” world experienced at the IWP was entirely different from the officially propagated anti-imperialist “alliance”: encounters with non-Western writers were direct and informal, interactions were nuanced and personal, resulting in a truer, unmediated form of knowledge and sympathy. Such interactions led also to discoveries of contemporaneous similarities in lived hardship and trauma, scarcity and vulnerability, all caused by comparable authoritarian regimes in East and South.

The subversive nature of such realization at the IWP aligns nicely with the insights of research on how official “Third Worldism” was appropriated in Soviet bloc countries by dissenting intellectuals and used in an ambivalent way to criticize the regime (Mark and Apor 2015, 862). As Maxim Matusevich observed, “Africa’s struggle for emancipation and freedom evoked some all-too-understandable sympathies among those whose own freedoms were significantly restricted” (Matusevich 2008, 71).

One example of a non-curated, personal, and potentially subversive engagement with the culture and history of Africa by an East European writer—prompted by the IWP experience—was Ágnes Gergely’s work translating Nigerian poetry and unpacking the oeuvre of Christopher Okigbo. In the preface of her monograph on Okigbo, she described her initial impression upon reading his poetry as a combination of discovery and familiarity, recognizing the supernatural world of an idiosyncratic private mythology that resulted from the Nigerian poet’s unique mixing of African folk motifs with classical European cultural references. She also identified Okigbo’s tragic life-story with the figure of the poet-martyr, a distinctive trope found in Hungarian literature as represented by the national poet, Sándor Petőfi, who died young in the Revolutionary War of 1848–1849 and Miklós Radnóti, a victim of the Holocaust.¹⁰

On the one hand, the association with such symbolic figures confer an aura of agelessness, seemingly removing Okigbo from Gergely’s present as the official narratives of “Third Worldism” would have it. Yet on the other hand, Okigbo’s attempt at cultural synthesis, at combining traditions in creative ways, made him into a closely felt contemporary. More importantly, instead of aiming to distance the unsettling topic of the Nigerian Civil War from the consolidated peace of Hungarian society, Gergely—herself a survivor of the Holocaust—emphasized the transgressive cultural relevancy of Okigbo’s poetic premonitions and depictions of imminent danger and state violence. In a 1988 interview about her interest in African literature, she revealed yet another aspect she found similar to the post-1945 East European context: the familiar problem of societies being “liberated” from past oppressive regimes—colonial or fascist—and the bitter disappointments of finding themselves under a different kind of oppressive and corrupt rule (Gergely 1988, 29). Gergely’s encounter with Nigerian poetry at the IWP opened up both her own art and also, to a small extent, Hungarian literature to a global sense of commonality and solidarity that both surpassed and questioned the official narratives about East-South interactions.

More directly related to the IWP residency, the diary of Nemes Nagy offers several insightful examples on the realizations of similarity and the parallels drawn between the self-perception of an East European intellectual and various newly discovered non-Western contexts. For instance, after listening to the lecture of Jose Flores Lacaba, the acclaimed poet and anti-Marcos activist from the Philippines, she writes:

It is almost funny, how the history of an oppressed nation on the other side of the globe so closely resembles ours. With great differences, of course. (...) At the moment, they are independent, yet writers and intellectuals are still thrown into jail by the government due to the martial law.

She identifies the cause for persecution as familiar to her own historical experience and notes with irony: “The native ‘dictatorship,’ the auto-cracy of one’s beloved homeland” (Nemes Nagy 1993, 38).

Although she never engaged in direct political activism or identified herself as a dissident, Nemes Nagy’s life and career were impacted upon by both the fascist regime of the Hungarian Arrow Cross Party during the Second World War and the Stalinist regime after the war. Together with her husband, Balázs Lengyel, she was involved in the efforts to save Hungarian Jews in Budapest during the Holocaust.¹¹ Following the war, together they established a highly acclaimed literary journal, called *Újhold* [New moon], publishing many of the best young writers of the period. Once the Stalinist rule was installed in 1948, Nemes Nagy and the literary circle around the journal was silenced and blacklisted. After the 1956 revolution, like several other Hungarian writers, her husband was jailed for weeks. They could re-enter the mainstream literary world to wide acclaim only in the late 1960s, becoming one of the most influential Hungarian poets and essayists of the period.

It is this troubled trajectory that she alludes to when commenting on Peter Nazareth’s novel about the Idi Amin regime in Uganda, *In a Brown Mantle*, calling it “the story of the complete moral disintegration of ‘leftwing freedom fighters’ after they come to power.” Linking it to post-1948 and post-1956 Hungary, her interpretation is unambiguous: “The topic of our age. Power and freedom. It is fascinating how the book describes the African version of our many, many experiences” (Nemes Nagy 1993, 80). Moreover, the similarities she perceives between her East European and the African contexts go beyond the level of political history, recognizing the shared cultural traits that arose from prolonged experiences of precarity and existential uncertainty. Before traveling back to Hungary at the end of the residency, Nemes Nagy gathered all of her remaining food and the appliances bought in the States and asked Mary Nazareth, Peter’s wife, if they could use any of it:

I was so glad when Mary told me, no food goes to waste in her household. She explains: when they arrived to the States she found it impossible to throw away used things, like they do it here. So, I tell her in return: I am also unable to throw out used stuff. In my childhood in Hungary it was considered a sin to throw away bread. We understand each other.

(Nemes Nagy 1993, 80)

The American setting served as a catalyst for these epiphanies, enacting the inevitable hierarchy between hosts and guests, between affluent locals and vulnerable foreigners, the managers of a Cold War cultural enterprise and their target audience. At the same time, Iowa City provided a cultural and political backdrop that highlighted a set of similarities and affinities between intellectuals who felt the need to reflect—perhaps for the first time—on their shared peripheral position within a global context. Besides the unifying power of literature, these were the divisions, hierarchies, and solidarities which defined the collective imagination of the IWP community of writers.

Conclusion

Each year, the International Writing Program in Iowa City brought together a few dozen writers from around the globe. They were invited to take part in Paul Engle's literary utopia, funded by the State Department and American corporations with the thinly veiled intention of transforming its international guests into appreciating the U.S. and improving the country's image worldwide. The writers were sent by their respective governments from Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, or Latin America to act as representatives of national cultures and entire regions with the corresponding purpose of furthering their country's cultural diplomacy projects abroad. The IWP was thus a meeting of diplomacy agendas—as well as a meeting of individuals who shared a professional identity and an intercultural meeting of “worlds.” However, what Paul Engle promoted in his yearly fundraising campaigns as the IWP's “community of imagination” was appropriated each year by the participating cohort—detaching it from the overarching conflicting geopolitical designs and the narrow paths of ideological discourses. Transforming the Program into a site of contest through their interactions, the writers subverted the superficial globalizing narrative of their American hosts and reflected on the inherent hierarchies within U.S. cultural diplomacy projects. Moreover, through discovery and communication, they produced a lived and personal solidarity: a deep and thorough knowledge between East and South. The participating writers created alternative, ad-hoc, and ephemeral global communities in Iowa City—recreating them within their works of fiction, translation, and criticism.

Notes

- 1 The archival research conducted for this publication was made possible by support from the Social Science Research Council's International Dissertation Research Fellowship, with funds provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Research in the Special Collections Department of the University of Iowa Libraries was supported by the 2017/2018 State Historical Society of Iowa Research Grant.

- 2 Paul Engle (1908–1991), a poet, editor, and pioneering teacher of creative writing was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He became known for his volume *American Song* in 1934, and received a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford, between 1933 and 1936. From 1941 to 1965 he directed the Iowa Writers' Workshop, and from 1967 to 1977 was head of the International Writing Program. Long-time friend A. William Averell Harriman nominated him and his second wife, Hualing Nieh, for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1976.
- 3 The award bore the inscription: "For sustained and significant contribution to international understanding, through decades of dedicated encouragement and inspiration to creative writers from his own and other lands."
- 4 Peter Nazareth is a critic and writer of fiction and drama, born in 1940 in Uganda of Goan ancestry. He is the author of two novels, *In a Brown Mantle* (1972) and *The General is Up* (1991), and is widely recognized for his book of essays *The Third World Writer: His Social Responsibility* (1978). He is also a professor of English and African-American World Studies at the University of Iowa.
- 5 Shrikant Varma (1931–1986) was an Indian poet and a Member of Parliament. In 1987, he was posthumously awarded the Sahitya Academy Award for *Magadh*, considered to be among the finest poetry collections of modern Indian literature.
- 6 Ottó Orbán (1936–2002) was a Hungarian poet, essayist, and translator of contemporary American authors like Allen Ginsberg and Kurt Vonnegut.
- 7 Ágnes Nemes Nagy (1922–1991) was a Hungarian poet, essayist, and translator. Her poetry was translated into English by Bruce Berlind. She wrote a diary during her 1979 stay at the IWP.
- 8 Imre Szász (1927–2003) was a Hungarian novelist, essayist, and translator of American authors like Hemingway and Jack London.
- 9 Ágnes Gergely (b. 1933) is a Hungarian writer, educator, journalist, and translator.
- 10 Christopher Okigbo (1932–1967) was a Nigerian poet, teacher, and librarian, who died in the Nigerian Civil War. He is one of the most acclaimed English-language African poets, known for his posthumously published volume, *Labyrinths with Path of Thunder* (1971). Sándor Petőfi (1823–1849) is regarded as Hungary's national poet and became a martyr-figure of the defeated Revolutionary War against Habsburg rule. Miklós Radnóti (1909–1944) was a Hungarian poet who was killed in the last months of World War II by Hungarian guards while being interned in a forced labor camp.
- 11 Recognized by the Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations in 1998.

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Part II

**Networks and Festivals of
Visual Art and Cinema**



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6 Cinema in the Spirit of Bandung: The Afro-Asian Film Festival Circuit, 1957–1964

Elena Razlogova

Afro-Asian cinematic exchange took off slowly after the celebrated 1955 Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia. At that point, strong film industries in Japan, India, and Egypt—then part of the United Arab Republic (UAR)—far outpaced any other national cinemas in the region. Most African territories remained under colonial power and had no national film industries. When the First Afro-Asian Film Festival (AAFF) took place in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in 1958, only 14 Asian and African countries participated, along with eight Soviet Asian republics.¹ The official festival communiqué announced future installments, in accordance with the “principles of the Bandung Conference” and “under the sign of peace and friendship among peoples” (*Iskusstvo kino* 1958b). Chinese delegates took exception to the emphasis on peace. “Our cinema art has to prop up the militant will of our peoples and inspire fear in our enemies,” they wrote in a private note to Tashkent festival organizers (RGALI 2944/13/206/122).² After two more meetings in Cairo and Jakarta the Afro-Asian festival ended in 1964.

Four years later, the First Tashkent Festival for Asian and African Cinema hosted over a hundred filmmakers from Asia and Africa, and observers from Latin America. By then, cinema became a key weapon of liberation. Many participants’ home countries—what was then called the Third World—pursued strategic alliances with the Soviet Union and the socialist Second World against colonialism, capitalism, and Western imperialism (Dirlik 2007). The festival drew on alliances between socialist states and anticolonial movements, renewed at the Tricontinental Conference in Havana, Cuba in 1966 (Mahler 2018). It joined a growing tricontinental network of film festivals from New Delhi, to Carthage, to Viña del Mar. It produced no joint communiqué. Despite its irenic slogan “For peace, social progress, and freedom of the peoples,” Cuban director José Massip did not feel sidelined at the 1968 Tashkent festival in the way the Chinese delegation felt in 1958. He reported in *Cine cubano* that “militant, revolutionary” cinema found a “passionate, sensitive, and receptive” public at Tashkent (Massip 1969).

The divergent Chinese and Cuban experiences a decade apart point to an evolving, contested, and understudied theory and practice of anti-colonial cinema in the Bandung era. The early Afro-Asian socialist film network expanded from the Asian Film Week (AFW) in Beijing in 1957 (Ma 2016), through Afro-Asian Film Festival meetings in Tashkent in 1958, Cairo in 1960, and Jakarta in 1964. This network has been largely forgotten. Studies of film festivals in the 1950s and early 1960s have bypassed the AAFF altogether, focusing on Venice, Cannes, and Berlin in Europe (Valek 2008), or, more recently, on the commercial Asian Film Festival (Lee 2020; Baskett 2017). The Afro-Asian festival's communiqués do not appear in a comprehensive compendium of cinema manifestos of all kinds that includes a special section on decolonization (MacKenzie 2014). Two historians mined Soviet archives to examine aspects of the Afro-Asian cinema network. Masha Kirasirova reveals Kamil Yarmatov, a Tajik director who worked mainly in Uzbekistan, as a key figure in Tashkent Afro-Asian meetings in 1958 and 1968 (Kirasirova 2014, 359–367). Rossen Djagalov, the only scholar to consider the entire Afro-Asian festival series, judges the earlier festival “a false start” in Second-Third World cinematic alliances because it “did not result in permanent structures and wider networks being formed” and “few” participants’ names are “recognizable” (Djagalov 2020, 138).

This chapter argues otherwise. It analyzes the Afro-Asian Film Festival as a “site of contest” for envisioning anticolonial cinema in the early Cold War. The AAFF matters as a cinematic thread in Bandung-era networks of organizations and conferences; as the earliest articulation of “cinematic Third Worldism” (Mestman 2002), a term usually used to describe militant anti-imperialist cinema of the 1960s and 1970s; and as a rise and fall of cinematic high diplomacy unique to the Cold War era. The chapter considers the entire Afro-Asian network, paying special attention to spectatorship and informal cinematic contacts at Tashkent. While the Afro-Asian film festival circuit emerged from the state-initiated nonaligned movement, by the post-1968 Tashkent reboot Asian and African filmmakers transformed the festival from a ritualized sphere of high diplomacy to a transnational cinematic event addressing multiple publics, where militant cinema had a voice and a captive audience.

Between Bandung and the Cultural Cold War

The Afro-Asian Film Festival participated in the Bandung-era nation-building after empire. The Bandung Afro-Asian Conference, spearheaded by Indonesian President Ahmed Sukarno, Jawaharlal Nehru of India, and Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, brought together 29 independent and decolonizing countries of the region. It established a common Third Worldist program of self-determination, peaceful coexistence, and non-alignment further developed at the 1961 Non-Aligned Conference in

Belgrade, Yugoslavia.³ In response to postwar decolonizations and the nonaligned movement, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev launched a program of “peaceful coexistence” with the West and cooperation with African and Asian nations (Westad 2005, 67–68). In 1955, Bandung organizers invited the People’s Republic of China (PRC) but excluded Soviet Asian republics from the conference. But the Soviets participated in Afro-Asian meetings that followed Bandung, most importantly, the December 1957 conference in Cairo that founded the Afro-Asian Peoples’ Solidarity Organization (AAPSO). In 1960, the Second AAPSO Congress at Conakry cited the Tashkent and Cairo AAFF festivals as examples of successful cultural cooperation (IIème Congrès 1960, 39). The AAFF emerged as a part of the Afro-Asian network.

The Beijing and Tashkent festivals interpreted the “Bandung spirit” as peaceful cooperation of sovereign nations. The Asian Film Week in Beijing included fourteen countries stretching from Syria to Japan and including Tajikistan, a Soviet republic.⁴ Cold-War tensions provided a backdrop. The PRC launched the event four months after it withdrew from the 1957 Cannes festival because Taiwan was also invited (New York Times 1957). At a festival reception, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, who had participated in the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference, announced that the AFW put in practice the Bandung call for cultural cooperation. Indian women’s rights activist Rameshwari Nehru, who gave a plenary at the Cairo inaugural AAPSO conference, spoke at the opening ceremony (Asian Recorder, 1957). The Bandung communiqué had expressed, among other things, a desire that “cooperation in the economic, social and cultural fields would help bring about the common prosperity and well-being of all” (“Final Communiqué” 2009, 102). In a joint concluding AFW communiqué the film delegations echoed the Bandung statement, calling for an annual Afro-Asian Film Festival, to “promote friendship between the people of Asia and Africa and play its part in safeguarding world peace” (Asian Recorder 1957).

The First Afro-Asian Film Festival also emphasized peace, cooperation, and national sovereignty. At the opening in Tashkent in late August 1958, the Soviets hailed the spirit of Bandung and the Asian Film Week as inspiration. The film festival preceded by a month the related Afro-Asian Writers Conference, endorsed by AAPSO in 1957. Tashkent, like Beijing, emulated Bandung’s state summit format. Soviet and Uzbek officials, including the Soviet Minister of Culture Nikolai Mikhailov, spoke at the opening ceremony. The festival awarded no prizes in order to include Morocco and Ghana with their first documentaries alongside India and Egypt, each boasting hundreds of feature films a year. In Soviet creative accounting, fourteen participating Asian and African states and the USSR became twenty-two countries in all promotional materials, with every Soviet Asian republic counted as a sovereign nation.⁵ All 22 delegations signed the final communiqué proposing a regular Afro-Asian

festival, with each installment hosted in a different country and a permanent organizing committee (Iskusstvo kino 1958b).

The Soviet spectacle of the Bandung spirit took precedence over viewing and debating cinema. Foreign delegates had no free time to talk: a guarded motorcade transported them from screenings to dinners and from ancient ruins to modern factories (RGANI 5/36/81/65; Kirasirova 2014). To tout Uzbekistan as the host nation, all films screened with Uzbek voiceover delivered via loudspeaker during projection. Asian, African, and Soviet festival guests who did not speak Uzbek had to rely on librettos translated in advance into Russian, English, and French. This translation system was often “inadequate,” as organizers admitted in their final report (RGANI 5/36/81/65). Moscow delegation head, director Ivan Pyriev, reportedly used a stick to herd Moscovites into sweltering theaters to watch Indonesian pictures they did not understand (Katanian 1997, 324). During a discussion at the Tashkent Film Studio, delegates agreed on Afro-Asian cooperation but stopped short of theorizing what cinema in the spirit of Bandung may look like. “We’ve got the official part down,” Armenian director Artashes Ai-Artian pleaded in vain, “can we now talk about films without ceremony?” (RGALI 2912/1/584/9).

In a cultural Cold-War coup, the festival featured Paul Robeson, a black American singer widely popular in the USSR since the 1930s, as an honored guest. Robeson, a vocal labor, civil rights, and global liberation advocate, had his U.S. passport taken away for seven years as a suspected communist. As a result, he could not travel to the Bandung conference in person and had to send a written greeting instead (Von Eschen 1997, 124, 171). Tashkent was among his first destinations after he got his passport back. In his speech at the festival, Robeson called on delegates to fight colonialism, preserve peace, and uphold Bandung principles (Yan 1958, 30). He contrasted Western movies depicting “murders, cowboy adventures, and military atrocities” to “humanist” African and Asian productions that “truthfully reflect people’s lives” (Iskusstvo kino 1958a, 76–77; Variety 1958). Robeson’s “unqualified public support of the meeting and its sponsors added more political flavor,” U.S. government analysts concluded in their report on the festival (USIS 1958).

Robeson went off the Soviet script, however, when he struck a personal friendship with an Armenian director Vasily Katanian. During official functions, Katanian shadowed the singer and his wife Eslanda Goode Robeson for a documentary about them. Snafus abounded: during a grandiose feast in Robeson’s honor at a collective farm the kolkhoz chairman kept forgetting Robeson’s name during every toast. The couple performed for the camera despite the blunders, the oppressive heat, and the busy schedule, including dinner with festival guests, film screenings, and a sold-out public concert at a stadium. The Robesons bonded with Katanian during this marathon. The director

ignored Mikhailov's order to connect Robeson to Asia in his documentary, a pity for the historian but an act of creative resistance at the time: "[Soviet officials] made him a public figure paying no attention to his talent, and my film was going down the same slippery slope" (Katanian 1997, 331). Katanian focused on Robeson's musical genius instead. What began at a staged Uzbek feast continued in Katanian's Moscow apartment several months later when *Paul Robeson* (1959) was completed. At an informal wrap party, Robeson sang spirituals and ate home-made caviar-topped eggs. Katanian remained close to the family, including Robeson's son Paul Jr., all his life (Katanian 1997, 324–333).

Soviet official protocol masked disagreements about anticolonial cinema at the festival. The Tashkent communiqué affirmed: during the "growing struggle of Asian and African nations against colonial oppression" filmmakers "desire... extensive cultural contacts and friendly cooperation" (Iskusstvo kino 1958b, 82). Chinese delegates disagreed. Their note to festival organizers reflected the growing militancy of Mao Zedong's rule in China, and his frustration with the official Soviet policy of neutrality in ongoing anticolonial uprisings (Westad 2005, 69–70). "Some filmmakers's ideas lag behind our leap forward to a new era," Wang Yan, Chinese delegation head and Beijing Film Studio chief, later noted in his report on the festival (1958, 31). The Chinese note slammed the Tashkent lineup: "We cannot agree with the ideology of some films." Anticolonial films have to show "everyday life of our peoples" and demonstrate that "we are not asking for peace, but aim to achieve it through armed struggle." In conclusion, the statement reaffirmed the spirit of Bandung and thanked Uzbekistan—not the Soviet Union—for hospitality (RGALI 2944/13/206/122). The Chinese were not alone in their criticism. Several Arab writers boycotted the Afro-Asian Writers Conference because the USSR did not publicly support Algerian guerrilla warfare against French colonizers (Katsakioris 2006, 21). Reports of screenings and personal conversations further clarify these disagreements.

Cinematic Sovereignty Across Ideological Lines

From the Afro-Asian perspective, three major circuits dominated the film festival scene in the 1950s. Film festivals, born in the 1930s, came into prominence after World War II. Until film festival programmers took over in the early 1970s, national governments submitted films for competition. The Afro-Asian film network provided a Third Worldist alternative to the prestigious European film festival circuit. Two flagship European festivals, Cannes and Venice, accepted into the competition and recognized as auteurs only a few filmmakers from Asia and Africa (Valck 2008). The Afro-Asian festival also served as a socialist counterpart to the commercial Southeast Asian Film Festival—later renamed the Asian Film Festival (AFF)—founded in 1954 by Japanese film

producers and funded in part by the Asia Foundation, a covert arm of the Central Intelligence Agency. In line with its pro-American orientation, the AFF welcomed delegations from Taiwan but not China and invited South Korea and South Vietnam but not their Northern socialist counterparts. Indonesia co-founded the AFF, but by 1964 boycotted it as capitalist and US-sponsored (Baskett 2017; Lee 2020).

The three networks, and the cinematic connections they enabled, were not as separate as it would seem from their antagonistic political and aesthetic viewpoints.⁶ The Thai entry at Beijing, *Santi-Vina* (dir. Thavi Na Bangchang, 1954), a Buddhist melodrama and the first color film made in Thailand, had won an award at the first Southeast Asian Film Festival in Tokyo in 1954, and was produced especially for that festival (Lee 2020, 72–73). After the Asian Film Week, both China and the Soviet Union bought it for distribution. Two realist social dramas, Japanese *The Rice People* (*Kome*; dir. Tadashi Imai, 1957) and Lebanese *Where To?* (*Ila Ayn?*; dir. George Nasser, 1957), had competed at Cannes before coming to Beijing. As films traveled across borders and across these three networks, Afro-Asian reception challenged European aesthetic hierarchies. During the Tashkent Studio discussion, Kamil Yarmatov recounted how at the Asian Film Week, “the Lebanese were surprised that the Mongolian people had their own cinema, and we, in turn, were surprised that Lebanon had its own cinema” (RGALI 2912/1/584/22). The Soviets saw Cannes selection *Where To?*; the Lebanese, an untraveled documentary *Modern Mongolia* (1957, dir. Tseveenzy Zandraa and Olga Podgoretskaya). In Yarmatov’s telling, the two cinematic discoveries were equivalent.

The Afro-Asian network stood out in one key element: it promoted anticolonial popular cinema. First, all its festivals targeted mass audiences, unlike Cannes, Venice, or the AFF, all open only to industry professionals. During the Asian Film Week, the films played at six Beijing theaters, then went to ten largest Chinese cities. In Beijing, long queues formed to get advanced tickets that quickly sold out, with additional screenings scheduled by popular demand as early as five o’clock in the morning. (People’s China 1957, 36). The Tashkent festival reported an audience of “more than one million” (RGANI 5/36/81/69). Second, many participants interpreted Bandung cultural cooperation as Afro-Asian commercial cooperation, and nonalignment, as Afro-Asian film industries’ independence from Hollywood. Many delegates, especially those from India, Pakistan, and Egypt, came to Tashkent to negotiate co-productions and business agreements with other national film industries in the Afro-Asian sphere. The Soviet film industry shared these goals: just before Tashkent, Yarmatov came back from India where he negotiated an (ultimately unrealized) co-production (RGALI 2912/1/584/20). Japan, India, and Egypt served as models of major Afro-Asian film industries that rivaled Hollywood in their output and international distribution.

Accordingly, the Afro-Asian circuit featured popular genre films shut out of European festivals. The AFW featured *Baaghi* (*The Rebel*, dir. Ashfaq Malik, 1956), an Urdu action blockbuster set during liberation struggles against British colonizers. South Asian song-and-dance melodramas captivated Tashkent festivalgoers. India presented two of them, Hindi *Bhabhi* (*Sister-in-Law*, dir. S. Panju and R. Krishnan) and Marathi *Gruhdevta* (*Family Deity*, dir. Madhav Shinde, 1957). Ceylon submitted *Vanaliya* (*The Forest Lass*, dir. B.A.W. Jayamanne, 1958), one of widely popular Sinhalese song-and-dance melodramas based on South Indian, mainly Tamil, models. These countries sent melodramas despite competing at Cannes with films that abandoned formulas to convey authentic local experiences: India with Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali* (1956), and Ceylon with Lester James Peries' *Rekhawa* (*The Line of Destiny*, 1956). Chinese delegates surely had Indian and Sri Lankan genre films in mind when they composed their protest. Yet from the perspective of Afro-Asian cooperation, *Vanaliya* made sense. Jayamanne told festival participants that cinema in Ceylon was "developing with the help of Indian filmmakers" (Faiziev 1958, 147).⁷

The most celebrated picture at Tashkent, *Turang* (*Beloved*; dir. Bachtiar Siagian, 1957), blended anticolonial history, melodrama, and action cinema. *Turang* tells a story of liberation struggle against Dutch colonialists in Northern Sumatra. Young revolutionary Rusli falls for a peasant girl Tipi while nursing his wounds in a remote village. The couple's bliss falls apart when a traitor gives away village partisans' plans. The lovers die in the ensuing attack, but the peasants retreat into the mountains to fight on. Tashkent audiences responded with enthusiasm. "Spectators in the Iskra theater, filled to capacity, gaze with bated breath on the screen," described poet and translator Mikhail Kurgantsev, "where a sunbeam slowly traverses the immobile faces of Rusli and Tipi. The sunrise glides over the blood-soaked ground of Indonesia. A haunting, heart-wrenching song begins, then subsides in the distance" (1958, 44). Immediately after the first screening, Sovexportfilm approached Abubakar Abdy, *Turang* producer, to buy the film for distribution in the Soviet Union. North Korean delegation expressed interest as well (Mimbar Penerangan 1958, 769). "This film proves once again that works exploring big political themes can achieve enduring popularity with spectators," concluded young Uzbek director Latif Faiziev (1958, 142). By blending an anticolonial message with dynamic storytelling, *Turang* transcended the Manichean logic of the Cold War. The film impressed Tashkent spectators and festival guests in 1958, won a national prize at the Indonesian Film Festival, and played at the Asian Film Festival in 1960.

Turang revealed another unique feature of the Afro-Asian cinematic circuit: nations could appropriate film authorship. At Tashkent, each state covered air travel for its representatives and thus dissident directors

could not attend.⁸ Bachtiar Siagian did not come to Tashkent with his film and not a single report mentions him as the director. Siagian may have been out of favor with Indonesian state officials because his previous, censored film sided with farmers and traders against a government urban development project in Jakarta (Sen 1994, 43). Festival reports introduce Abdy, frequent Siagian's collaborator, as "a co-creator" or even "the director" of the film. Funded in part with regional government support, *Turang* was shot on location of the depicted struggle, in the Karo region of North Sumatra, and featured local villagers as actors. Abdy told film critic Georgy Kapralov that "he personally participated in the liberation battles of his people" against the Dutch. Kapralov took this as further proof of *Turang's* authenticity (1958, 27). Abdy represented Siagian's vision well: in 1964, back in good graces and organizing the Jakarta festival, the director praised the radical Indonesian delegation at Tashkent (Siagian 1964, 15).

In another case of national authorship, Ghana submitted two shorts, a documentary *Freedom for Ghana* (1957) and a dance film *Jaguar* (1958), both directed (uncredited at the festival) by Sean Graham, a British former head of the colonial Gold Coast Film Unit, with a mixed British and Ghanaian crew (Rice 2019, 81, 233–236). With the pictures came Joseph Odunton, an Oxford-educated screenwriter and Ghanaian official who started as a local translator for colonial mobile cinemas during World War II. In a trenchant critique of the colonial film unit published in 1950, Odunton had argued that films made for African spectators must "reflect the social and cultural aspirations of their audience" (1950, 25). *Freedom for Ghana*, a color documentary of the country's first independence day, expressed such aspirations: in a key scene, a Ghanaian national flag rises in place of a Union Jack, joined by a voiceover that one British critic thought "positively inflammatory." (Monthly Film Bulletin 1957). Following Odunton's lead, Tashkent festival reports praised the documentary as a Ghanaian production.

At least in one instance, Tashkent cinephilia exceeded state purposes at the festival. A Moroccan short *Amrar's Daughter* documented a folk theater performance on a 16mm color film accompanied by a soundtrack on magnetic tape where an announcer explained the narrative and voiced all the dialogue.⁹ The Centre Cinématographique Marocain (CCM) produced such actualities for rural cinema caravans, providing audio tape in Arabic and two main Berber dialects and counting on local commentators to translate into others (Carter 2009, 63–64). At Tashkent, published reports praised this government-sponsored informational film as an experimental blend of documentary and fiction, complete with a love-story plot and "non-professional fellahi actors" (Kapralov 1958, 44; Kurov 1958, 18). The underground feel of the screening shaped this interpretation. Organizers rummaged for a proper projector at the Tashkent Film Studio and borrowed a reel-to-reel audio

recorder from a private apartment to play both film and audio in sync (Faiziev 1958, 143). On top of all that, a translator delivered a “lively and witty” oral commentary in Uzbek (Kapralov 1958, 31). In its encounter with the audience, the short came to embody a new anticolonial aesthetic inspired by the technical limitations of decolonized film industries.¹⁰ Tashkent projectionists, interpreters, and spectators became the film’s “genuine co-authors,” in line with the concept of revolutionary “imperfect” cinema Cuban director Julio García Espinosa would propose in 1969 (García Espinosa 2014, 224). Impressed by audience enthusiasm, the Soviets bought *Amrar’s Daughter* for distribution (Guliamov 1958, 233).

The Afro-Asian cinematic Third Worldism advocated statist forms of anticolonial cinema. In 1957, the Beijing communiqué set the aim to “bring prosperity to the film industries of the Asian and African countries” (Asian Recorder 1957). To that end, in their final Tashkent statement, participants resolved to coproduce films, to share cinematic knowledge and technologies, and to exchange “feature, documentary, and scientific pictures” (Iskusstvo kino 1958b). The same practical goals, in a tricontinental formulation, appeared again among the resolutions of the Third World Filmmakers Committee, a meeting of 45 African, Latin American, and Asian anti-imperialist filmmakers in Algiers in 1973 (Mestman 2002). Both manifestos envisioned a film production and distribution infrastructure independent from the film industries of the United States and former colonial powers. For many participants at Beijing and Tashkent, anticolonial cinema in the spirit of Bandung meant cinematic sovereignty: building a robust national film industry in collaboration with other nonaligned states. By the 1970s, the filmmaker’s role in the anti-imperialist struggle, as defined by the Third World Filmmakers Committee, was “no longer limited to the making of films,” but extended to “associating cinema in a more concrete way in this struggle” (“Resolutions” 2014, 280). Chinese militant critique of cinematic sovereignty in response to the Tashkent communiqué, as well as experimental aspects of Tashkent screenings, prefigured the guerrilla cinematic Third Worldism of the post-1968 moment.

Contradictions and Legacies

The evolution of the Afro-Asian cinema network paralleled the transition from the Bandung peaceful coexistence model to a militant Non-Alignment tricontinental alliance where smaller nations such as Cuba and Algeria had more power (Byrne 2015). In February–March 1960, the Second AAFP in Cairo hosted ten delegations, including observers from Yugoslavia, the future host of the 1961 inaugural Non-Aligned Conference, and a Palestinian representative, Gamal Arafat, elder brother of Yasser Arafat, who in 1959 co-founded the militant

Palestinian National Liberation Movement, or Fatah, and would become the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization.¹¹ In April 1964, the Third AAFF in Jakarta welcomed twenty-two delegations, including a host of decolonized African states and the revolutionary Liberation Front of South Vietnam.¹² The two final festivals played out the tension between cinematic sovereignty and cinematic militancy.

The cinematic Third Worldism promoted in Cairo was socialist in goals and capitalist in execution. In an important 1968 manifesto young radicalized Egyptian filmmakers charged that in Nasser's Egypt "cinema grew out of the public sector" but the state promoted high-budget "Hollywood production practices" where "stars are transformed into commodities" (New Cinema Group 2018, 30–31). What young filmmakers later saw as aping the United States the older generation at the Cairo AAFF conceived as nonaligned entertainment cinema. Popular genres dominated the lineup, spearheaded by Tamil anticolonial action epic *Veerapandiya Kattabomman* (dir. B. R. Panthulu, 1959) which took away three prizes and "drew repeated applause" from audiences (Asian Recorder 1960). Meanwhile, the Soviet embassy panned festival organization as "exclusively socialist," with too few capitalist countries participating (RGALI 2329/8/1558/99). Five festival meetings discussed Afro-Asian cinematic cooperation, including festival organization, the final communiqué, co-productions, transnational film distribution, and transnational publicity for movie stars, or what Sabir Mukhamedov, Soviet delegation head and Uzbekistan's Minister of Culture, dismissed as "exchange and popularization of actresses" (RGALI 2912/1/584/21). The discussions tackled mundane barriers to film exchange that would remain crucial in the 1960s and 1970s: customs, censorship, and incompatibilities between private (UAR, India) and nationalized (USSR, China) film industries. The final communiqué refused to resolve these contradictions. It put commerce alongside Afro-Asianism: "We, who are engaged in the film business, and members of the Bandung conference..." It further noted "the different social systems in the national life of the Afro-Asian Group" and the need to "respect ... the way of life in each country" (RGALI 2329/8/1558/86).

Several voices disrupted the conciliatory high diplomacy at Cairo. Star power allowed Egyptian actresses Madiha Yousri and Magda Kamel to engage in debates, whereas Yousri was present but had no real voice at Tashkent. Magda Kamel confronted India, for refusing to buy the anti-imperialist film she produced and starred in, *Jamila the Algerian* (dir. Youssef Chahine, 1958), and the Soviet Union, for delaying the purchase (RGALI 2329/8/1558/101). The film came out in the USSR in 1962. Nations with nascent film industries decried the unequal two-tier system that allowed only UAR, India, China, and the Soviet Union to compete for prizes. Delegates reminded the organizers that many countries cannot afford the AAFF. Travel expenses and the strict requirement of expensive

English or Arabic subtitles made participation impossible for Burma, Thailand, Ethiopia, and Ghana (RGALI 2329/8/1558/91, 101–102). The 1968 Tashkent festival would take these grumbles into account.

The Jakarta AAFF promoted tricontinental solidarity in anti-imperialist and anticapitalist struggle. The festival, endorsed by the Third AAPSO Conference in Moshi, Tanzania (RGALI 2944/13/206/3), militarized the spirit of Bandung. In the final communiqué delegates vowed “to support the liberation movement of the peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and to make use of films, the weapon in our hand, to this end” (FBIS 1964, RRR6). The festival executive committee headed by *Turang* director Bachtiar Siagian, proclaimed the event “not a commercial project, but a tool of the Afro-Asian people for the realization of their common objectives:” the fight “against cultural penetration of imperialist and colonialist forces.” Accordingly, the AAFF organized a mass boycott of American films. “By early June, the boycott had spread through the country and only a very few American films continued to be shown in very small communities,” USIS official Burt McKee reported (1964). The USSR did not fare much better. Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated further over withdrawal of Soviet nuclear arms from Cuba (Westad 2005, 160–162). Chinese sway over most AAFF participants “constantly made itself felt in the hostile attitude toward the Soviet delegation and the Soviet Union” (RGALI 2918/4/106/16-17). The USSR received only one minor prize, for cinematography in *Children of Pamir* (*Deti Pamira*, dir. Vladimir Motyl, 1962). Only then the Soviets understood the significance of the 1958 Chinese protest note. “I.e. no peaceful co-existence!” an anonymous official jotted in the margins of the note in 1964 (RGALI 2944-13-206/122).

Militant cinema dominated at Jakarta. This militancy was state-sponsored: half-empty theaters played festival films to Sukarno’s supporters while official media trumpeted their success (McKee 1964). The festival welcomed documentaries from new revolutionary cinemas, including unedited 16mm footage from North Kalimantan which received “an ovation” (Hui-Min 1964, 7). Spectators at the Chinese 3-hour color epic *Red Detachment of Women* (*Hóngsè Niángzi Jūn*, dir. Xie Jin, 1961) gave “great cheering at every appearance of the Communist flag, the red guerrillas, or any act of violence perpetrated against the old established order [i.e. imperialist West]” (McKee 1964). The film won a top prize. On the jury, the Chinese members and *Turang* director Bachtiar Siagian lambasted Soviet films according to the tenets of revolutionary cinema. These tenets incorporated a Soviet trace—Siagian discovered film theory with Vsevolod Pudovkin in Chinese translation (2013)—but decolonization put this trace in a different light. *Five from Fergana* (*Piatero iz Fergany*, dir. Yuldash Agzamov, 1963), a drama about Communist youth organizing in Turkestan, slid into “universal humanism.” Anti-imperialist documentary *Law of Baseness* (*Zakon podlosti*, 1962) by Alexander Medvedkin—whose 1930s

ciné-trains would inspire Chris Marker's 1960s militant SLON film collective—insulted Congolese religious beliefs (RGALI 2944/13/206/80). “Why did the USSR send this film?” a Congolese delegate confronted Soviet guests during the festival. “Only Africans should make films about Africa” (RGALI 2944/13/206/76).

Revolutionary African and Asian filmmakers built creative alliances that exceeded official festival slogans. At Jakarta, a dozen African filmmakers from seven sub-Saharan countries could meet and see each other's films, a unique opportunity at the time. Dmitry Pisarevsky, the chief editor of *Sovetsky ekran*, lauded several documentaries from “African nations that just won their independence,” including films from Uganda, North Rhodesia, Somalia, and an “informative and decently shot” 35-mm color *Zanzibar People March Forward* (1964), a documentary prize winner (RGALI 2944/13/206/73). Japanese director Satsuo Yamamoto's encounters with the DRV delegation led to an invitation to Hanoi where he supervised the making of a blockbuster antiwar documentary *Vietnam (Betonamu)*, 1969; Yamamoto 2017, 214). Celebrity and glamor coexisted with militancy. DRV actress-director Nguyen Thi Duc Hoan, feted as “one of the most charming and attractive stars that has graced our Festival,” came away inspired by contacts with Asian and African socialist filmmakers (Turner 2007, 105). Sabir Mukhamedov, again Soviet delegation head, lamented that young female movie stars from the DRV, PRC, UAR, India, and Pakistan eclipsed Kazakh doyenne actress Amina Umurzakova, and suggested in the future to “include actresses according to their age and popularity” (RGALI 2944/13/206/59). The 1968 Tashkent festival took seriously both militant and popular Global South cinemas.

The organizers of the First Tashkent Festival for Asian and African Cinema—including Kamil Yarmatov, Latif Faiziev, and Sabir Mukhamedov (RGALI 2944/24/126/7-8)—revised the festival infrastructure for travel funding, film translation, and socializing. The event, still popular and noncompetitive, featured guests and films from 49 Asian and African countries (RGALI 2936/4/1835/1). China was not invited. The Soviets handled travel expenses for Asian and African guests and chartered an Aeroflot plane to fly participants from the Carthage Festival for Arab and African Cinema in Tunisia (Djagalov and Salazkina 2016, 293). In a relay system, films were first translated into Russian (via loudspeaker) to the Soviets and then into English and French (via headphones) to foreign guests. The festival now organized “creative discussions” on cinema and liberation struggles. All participants stayed at the same hotel and mingled at official and impromptu meals, dances, and parties (Razlogova 2013, 165, 168).

These changes produced multiple festival publics, accommodated several directions for Third World cinema, and allowed South-South collaborations tangential to or critical of Soviet official policies.

Senegalese director Ousmane Sembène disagreed with much in Soviet film aesthetics and modernization theories, as Julie-Françoise Tolliver shows in this volume. Yet Sembène came to nearly every Tashkent festival, to meet with African filmmakers and build pan-African cinematic institutions. Egyptian Madiha Yousri, one of a few actresses at the 1958 Tashkent festival, in 1968 was celebrated among many movie stars by Tashkent residents who flocked to Indian and Egyptian melodramas (Djagalov and Salazkina 2016, 283). Guy Hennebelle, a militant French critic, saw in Tashkent “a much more eclectic tableau than in Tunis of cinematic reality in Africa and Asia” (1968, 34). In 1976, the Tashkent festival became tricontinental, renamed the Tashkent Festival for Asian, African, and Latin American Cinema. Until its end in 1988, Tashkent kept visible the tension between popular and militant strands of anticolonial cinema born at the Afro-Asian Film Festival of the Bandung era.

Conclusion

Cold War imperialism decimated Afro-Asian anticolonial cinema networks. *Turang* director Bachtiar Siagian, for example, spent 13 years in prison and saw all but one of his films destroyed by the right-wing Suharto regime installed in 1965 with the help of the United States. Only since the mid-1990s, thanks to Krishna Sen’s historical and theoretical interventions, Siagian reappeared in discussions of militant cinema from the Global South (Sen 1994; Sen 2003). Further study of the AAFF promises to reveal global connections among early militant filmmakers such as Siagian, as well as pioneers of Asian and African popular cinemas. This chapter suggests two avenues for further analysis of the Afro-Asian Film Festival as a “site of contest” for anticolonial cinema in the age of Bandung.

First, Global South artists’ creative aims and collaborations matter for cultural diplomacy, apart from the goals of their governments. Historians of Cold War cinematic diplomacy tend to zero in on governments’ attempts to win the “hearts and minds” of foreign citizens (Shaw and Youngblood 2014) and draw the boundaries of Asia along the Soviet border excluding Soviet Asian republics in a gesture of “cartographical dismemberment” (Lewis and Stolte 2019, 8). But African and Asian filmmakers’ creative aims were often distinct from the goals of their governments. Soviet Asian artists gained authority because Soviet leaders needed them to court African, Asian, and Latin American cultural elites after Bandung (Kirasirova 2011; Kalinovsky 2013; Jansen 2019). Their Afro-Asian encounters transformed their filmmaking. Latif Faiziev, a realist revolutionary drama director in 1958, spent a third of his article on the Tashkent AAFF dissecting South Asian song-and-dance melodramas, and subsequently served several times as a Soviet cinematic envoy to the region (1958, 145–148; RGALI 2944/24/34/71). In the 1980s, he would co-direct,

with Umesh Mehra, three Soviet-Indian song-and-dance co-productions, starting with the blockbuster *Ali Baba and 40 Thieves* (*Alibaba Aur 40 Chor/Priklyucheniya Ali-Baby i soroka razboimikov*, 1980).¹³ Tashkent became a key node on the Afro-Asian network where Soviet Asian filmmakers negotiated their Soviet, Afro-Asian, and later tricontinental loyalties. These filmmakers'—all Global South filmmakers'—creative, cinematic internationalism deserves to be taken into account.

Secondly, Bandung matters for the history of anticolonial and anti-imperialist cinema. Histories of militant cinema from the Global South usually begin in the 1960s, when filmmakers coalesced around the Third Cinema movement that spread from Latin America to international festivals and conferences, from Viña del Mar to Pesaro (Mestman and Salazkina 2015). The post-1968 Tashkent festival became an important node on this anti-imperialist cinema network (Djagalov and Salazkina 2016). The concept of Third Cinema, articulated by Argentinian filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino in 1969, united a network of manifestos and transnational organizations, including the Pan-African Filmmakers' Association and the Third World Cinema Committee (Diawara 2001, 35–50; Mestman 2002). Yet several key points advanced in these manifestos and meetings—about cinema as an instrument of peace or war, the divergent aims of Global South political and commercial cinemas, and proper revolutionary film aesthetics—were already debated on the Afro-Asian film festival circuit. Cinematic Third Worldism began in the age of Bandung.

Notes

- 1 The Soviet Asian republics include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.
- 2 I cite RGALI and RGANI archival references according to their location: [fond/opis/ed.khr./page number](http://fond/opis/ed.khr./page%20number).
- 3 On Bandung history, see Prashad 2007; Young 2016; Lee 2010; and Lewis and Stolte 2019, among others.
- 4 People's China 1957, 37. Other participants were Burma (now Myanmar), Cambodia, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), China, Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Mongolia, North Korea, Pakistan, Singapore, and Thailand. Syria sent a delegation but no films.
- 5 Other participants included Burma, Ceylon, China, DRV, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Morocco, Mongolia, North Korea, Pakistan, and Thailand. Sudan sent an observer. Japan did not officially participate but two Japanese studios sent films.
- 6 On a similar phenomenon in literature, see Popescu 2020.
- 7 For more on connections between Sri Lankan and South Indian cinemas see Tampoe-Hautin 2017.
- 8 On the importance and government control of air travel in the Bandung era, see Lewis 2019.
- 9 *La fille de l'Amrar* by French documentary filmmaker Jean Mazel.
- 10 For continuities between the CCM actualities format and Moroccan experimental modernist cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, see Limbrick 2015.

- 11 Other delegations included China, DRV, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, North Korea, UAR, and USSR. Kuwait participated as an observer. Japan did not officially participate but individual studios sent films.
- 12 Other delegations included Afghanistan, China, Congo (Léopoldville; now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), DRV, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lebanon, Mali, Mongolia, North Kalimantan (now part of Indonesia), North Korea, North Rhodesia (now Zambia), Pakistan, Somalia, “Southeast” (Southwest?) Africa, Tunisia, UAR, Uganda, and Zanzibar (now part of Tanzania). Four countries, including Iraq and the Philippines, sent films but no delegates.
- 13 For more on this film, see Salazkina 2010.

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7 From Dakar to Diaspora: The Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres as Nexus and Network

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1960 marked a turning point for independence movements across Africa as 17 countries gained their sovereignty. The first cultural event of independent Africa to have a global resonance took place a mere six years later in Dakar, the coastal capital of Senegal. Titled *Le premier festival mondial des arts nègres* (the First World Festival of Negro Arts, typically abbreviated as FESMAN), it aimed to bring together artists, performers, writers, and thinkers from the continent of Africa, along with descendants in the diaspora. In 1962, Senegal's president, Léopold Senghor, put the gears in motion for this global festival that would valorize Black creators and their cultures—a vision that had been percolating since the 1956 and 1959 Congresses of Black Artists and Writers (*Premier Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres* 1967). In his radio proclamation to the people of Senegal, he promised that the world would come to Dakar to celebrate what Africa had contributed to historic and modern universal civilization (Ficquet and Gallimardet 2009, 138). Nearly 30 countries participated in FESMAN, making up the four pillars of the festival: 1) a colloquium sponsored by UNESCO that brought together world experts who could address the questions of what “negro art” was, and what it brought to civilization; 2) separate exhibitions of traditional, modern, and artisanal arts; 3) a suite of performances that ranged from solo to group, and across all genres of song, dance, and theater; and 4) a *son et lumière* (sound and light) show on Gorée Island which consisted of re-enactment tableaux from specific historical moments.

A call for participants was sent to the governments of nations that were known to have significant diasporic populations; therefore, any participation in the festival necessitated a state-appointed committee and state support. Cultural expressions on display, then, were largely reflective of nationalist ideals—or, at least, were not in opposition to them. To that end, FESMAN became a nexus for superpowers in the Cold War, as well as nations in the Global South, to meet on new terrain: a liberated African nation. From Brazil to Nigeria, and the U.S. to the USSR, important officials and representatives gathered under the auspices of acknowledging the historic and contemporary significance of Black creators. New solidarities

between actors in the Global South were established at FESMAN, at both the national and individual levels. And the dynamics of how the Soviets and Americans related to these regions are reflected in the documentary films that each nation sponsored. The U.S. projected to send a large retinue of visual artists, performers, and celebrities, perhaps as a counterbalance to its unflattering reputation of fostering racial oppression, or perhaps to concretize relations with France (as the two biggest sponsors of FESMAN) in order to access African nations behind the “Camembert curtain” (Blake 2011, 50). And though the Soviet Union lacked a sizeable Black diasporic population (see Bethlehem, et al. in this volume), they actively supported festival logistics by loaning sculptures for the *l’Art Nègre* exhibition and by providing ocean liners to serve as auxiliary hotels (Figure 7.1). The presence of these contingencies is most certainly an extension of soft power as part of a larger program—one that included U.S. President Kennedy appointing Black ambassadors to African nations—to gain influence and win allies among the independent African nations (Murphy 2016, 31).

This chapter considers three dynamics that unfolded during and after FESMAN: artistic solidarity between Black visual and musical artists; the Soviet mission to highlight Western imperialism and vocalize a pro-Africa stance; and the African-American position in relation to the U.S. and Africa. While the first relationship is best addressed through analysis of what was displayed during those three weeks in April of 1966, the latter two are embodied in documentary films created for post-festival distribution: the Soviets’ *African Rhythms* and the Americans’ *The First World Festival of Negro Art*. Like many cultural events of this era, FESMAN served as a site of reunion and exchange, creating new partnerships that would shape nascent cultural landscapes in the Global South.

Toward a New Solidarity

While most of the festival was directed by the governmental organizing bodies that responded to Senegal’s call, two aspects of FESMAN created more space for interactions between Black artists and their ideas: the musical performances and the exhibition of contemporary art. African-Americans like Duke Ellington, Alvin Ailey, Hoyt Fuller, and Langston Hughes would later recount the festive atmosphere and their connections with African visitors. Ellington conversed with audience members who congregated backstage after his concert (Figure 7.2), describing how the Africans’ “acceptance at the highest level” inspired a “once in a lifetime feeling of having truly broken through to our brothers” (Jaji 2014, 102). Outside of official venues, critic Hoyt Fuller noted that social circles and people groups collided as they danced the Frug and Watusi in public spaces, médinas, and abandoned buildings (Fuller 1966, 100). Using Langley’s terminology (1978), this genre of interaction can be termed “pan-Africanism”—a more informal register of communication and exchange



Figure 7.1 Moneta Sleet, Jr. ‘Jim Tolliver (Peace Corps) and aunt, Ida Wood (Phelps-Stokes Fund), stand beside the Russian ‘floating hotel’ at FESMAN,’ *Ebony*, vol. 21, no. 9, 1966.

between members of the continent and its diaspora, in contrast to “Pan-Africanism” which operates as an ideological or political movement. As the distinct Black populations from the Americas, Europe, and Africa found themselves pressed together in this relatively small African city, so did their conversations about independence movements, civil rights, premodern traditions, and contemporary life. Given the panoply of languages represented by festival attendees, these encounters around music, dance, and visual arts alleviated the burden of constant translation.

From the home of U.S. Ambassador Mercer Cook, to the reception hosted by Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, to the Dakar denizens gathered for dancing in the Place de l'Indépendance, reunions happened between citizens and guests at every social class. For the visual arts, however, *Trends and Confrontations* (*Tendances et Confrontations*), the exhibition of modern and contemporary art, inspired more dialogue and exchange than *Negro Art* (*L'Art Nègre*), the exhibition of classical masks and figures. Both exhibitions were a feat to mount, each featuring over 600 works gathered from collections around the globe. While *Negro Art* was organized by seven commissioners who began working in 1963 and built collaborations with 88 museums, universities, churches, and collectors, *Trends and Confrontations* was coordinated by one Senegalese artist, Iba N'Diaye, who was handed the reins in 1965. And whereas the organizers of *Negro Art* had a full choice over which objects to curate into the exhibition, N'Diaye was at the whim of what each nation had selected through their internal processes, in accordance with the festival's call for participants: "The Exhibition of Contemporary Arts 'Trends and Confrontations' [...] is to reflect the unity and originality of the present-day Negro world, through its most representative works of art" (FESMAN Festival Mondiale des Arts Nègres Call for Participants 1965, 49). Though reviewers largely did not appreciate the cacophonous mishmash of objects, ranging from expressionist painting and abstract sculpture, to leather shoes and taxidermy butterflies, I have described how N'Diaye's exhibition actually accommodated for the experimentation of Black artists who were living in a time of flux, and who searched for their place in the global movements of modern and/or contemporary art (Underwood 2019). N'Diaye himself described the exhibition title as a happy accident because it "corrected the overly ambitious intention declared by the organizers of the festival[...] In reality, [*Trends and Confrontations*] was characterized by a great heterogeneity" (N'Diaye 1970; as quoted in Vincent 2017). N'Diaye revels in the asynchronous quality of the exhibition title, contrasting the immense variety of styles on display with the supposed unity in "the present-day Negro world."

Though few of them were known at the time, the roster of artists at *Trends and Confrontations* has since become the who's who in African Modernism and mid-century African-American art: Frank Bowling, Skunder Boghossian, Barbara Chase-Riboud, Ahmed Cherkaoui, Uzo Egonu, Ibrahim El-Salahi, Sam Gilliam, Richard Hunt, Gebre Kristos, Demas Nwoko, Uche Okeke, Bruce Onobrakpeya, Gerard Sekoto, Gazbia Sirry, Papa Ibra Tall, Charles White, Aubrey Williams, and others. Besides N'Diaye's curatorial role, other artists also held leadership positions, including Hale Woodruff for the American selection committee, Nigerian Ben Enwonwu as the sole visual artist to speak at the colloquium, and Ethiopian Afewerk Tekle as the coordinator for his country's delegation. In contrast to the static nature of *Negro Art* and its



Figure 7.2 Moneta Sleet, Jr. 'Duke Ellington and an unidentified festival attendee,' *Ebony*, vol. 21, no. 9, 1966.

glass vitrines, *Trends and Confrontations* fostered an experimental space for the young artists of Senegal to commingle with the nascent African Modernist movements, either with the visiting artists or with their artwork proxies. Even artists in exile, like the great South African Gerard Sekoto, managed to return for FESMAN, even though it became his final trip to Africa. The legacy of this exhibition is long, with many of these artists intersecting again—either in Africa or in the established Euro-American art circuits. For example, only three years later, *Contemporary African Art* was mounted at the Camden Art Centre in London, with the majority of artists having already exhibited together at FESMAN. And the spirit of this exchange was carried forward into the 1977 Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) when Nigeria picked up the torch of gathering together the Black diaspora. As a site for convergence, FESMAN directly impacted the landscape of Black and African modernity by shaping subsequent cultural encounters around the globe.

Though the networks of Black creators—from the Caribbean to Rio de Janeiro to Addis Ababa—greatly expanded at the festival, the timing of the event ensured that political forces locked in the Cold War would make their presence known in an attempt to garner influence. To juxtapose their competing ideologies, we now turn to the two documentaries that remain the primary audiovisual records of this landmark cultural event.

African Rhythms: A Soviet Vision

The FESMAN film produced by the Soviets was indelibly shaped by the vision and goals of its two directors, Irina Venzher and Leonid Makhnach. Venzher had directed since the 1940s, with several reels created under the commission of the government-run Central Studio for Documentary Film (CSDF). Her most notable films include *Parad Pobety* (Парад Победы, 1945), which captured the parade in Moscow's Red Square under the eye of Joseph Stalin, and *Youth of Our Country* (Молодость нашей страны, 1946), which won a prize at the inaugural Cannes Film Festival. Bookending the 1966 festival in Senegal, Venzher led CSDF projects entitled *Great Patriotic War (Soviet People's Participation in World War II in 1941–1945; 1965)* and *Women's Fate* (1967), both emphasizing the heroism of Soviet citizens. Her younger co-director, Makhnach, began directing films in the 1960s. Some of his titles contemporaneous to FESMAN were *Drops of Poison* (1965) and *The Heroic Deed* (1966); these addressed the interference of capitalist nations in USSR initiatives and the life of a 1920s revolutionary, respectively. Makhnach would direct dozens of later films for the CSDF, including films for African state visits to Moscow and the Washington Summit of 1987.¹ For the CSDF to choose such storied directors as their

representatives in Senegal, it is clear that the state was heavily invested in the festival's outcome. With the largest entourage of any filmmakers at FESMAN, Venzher and Makhnach supervised over a dozen team members. Though their equipment was somewhat dated, the film is remarkable for its quality of color and the crispness of sound. In this volume, Gesine Drews-Sylla also observes the high production quality of *African Rhythms* and notes the filmmakers' investment as they invited additional personnel, like Afro-Russian Africanist Lily Golden, to consult on the film.

The team ultimately produced two films from the event, each showing different footage. *People's Art of Senegal* runs just under 10 minutes in length, featuring clips of dancers, weavers, and carvers in Soumbédioune (the "Exposition Artisanat Vivant"), and an extended scene from Amadou Cissé Dia's play, *The Last Days of Lat Dior*. *African Rhythms* clocks in around 50 minutes and constitutes the primary Soviet vision of the festival in all its components.

Even a cursory film analysis proves that dance and music are the key elements shaping the structure of the film. The titular rhythms dominate the visual and sonic registers of the documentary—the dance, song, and theater pillar of FESMAN is well-represented, while the colloquium is only briefly addressed and the art exhibitions are essentially absent. The film begins and ends with a performance from the Trinidadian steel drum ensemble as calypsonian Mighty Terror, fresh off his win as the 1966 Calypso King, sings an original, unpublished song (Figure 7.3). Mighty Terror sings of an ancestral connection to Dakar and wishes its denizens a prosperous life proportional to their effusive welcome. However, the jovial calypsonian spirit fades by the time the musician intones the final lyrics of the jaunty song:

"Politics is definitely not my line, but I can tell you a thing or two from time to time.

Keep certain people out this place because they do not like the colored race!"

From Mighty Terror's last line, to segments of the *son et lumière* show, the Soviet film did not shy away from the horrors of African history. In fact, *African Rhythms* offers an extended view of Gorée Island, its slave quarters, and the so-called "door of no return" as the narrator recounts the thousands of lives lost to the ships and the sea.² In another scene, the viewer is reminded, "Long ago, everyone was discovering Africa: dashing merchants and pirates, colonels that called themselves soldiers, sly missionaries and greedy admirals, and she resisted as well as she could." This sentiment was further reinforced in a Soviet-designed exhibition at the festival that outlined the lack of Soviet involvement with



Figure 7.3 Still from *African Rhythms* featuring Mighty Terror.

the slave trade and colonialism. These low angle shots of dead baobabs and colonial slave houses contrast sharply with the vibrant, percussive dances that make up most of the film. From Niger's beautiful dance of the hunter and fowl, to the United Arab Republic's folk dance, to the Alvin Ailey dance company's sorrowful spiritual (the only aspect of the American delegation shown in the Soviet film), the Black body in motion was the through line for *African Rhythms*. Though it may have been a nod to Senghor's observation of Africans as "people of the dance,"³ the Soviet homogenization of African cultural expressions falls particularly flat. At various points, the narration lends an ethnographic weight to the otherwise dynamic visuals. Though they may have rung familiar in the first half of the twentieth century, statements like "the African musical talent is widely known" or "even if they were falling from the sky, they would still be beating out the rhythm" or "you cannot become a drummer; you must be born one. We don't play the drum; we merge with it" reinforce tired stereotypes and undermine the scenes where nations, people, or works of art are, notably, named individually.

In comparison to the American film, *African Rhythms* offers more close-ups on individual people. From Ivoirian novelist Bernard Dadié, Mauritanian writer Oumar Bâ, and Cameroonian Jesuit priest Engelbert Mveng at the colloquium, to French cabaret star Josephine Baker and

Guadeloupean singer Moune de Rivel on the stage, the Soviet directors paired tight shots with narrated identification of the visiting luminaries. But, in socialist everyman fashion, the film features an equal amount of close-ups on unnamed individuals who danced in the street, marched in the sixth Independence Day parade, or attended the performances. Though unnamed, many of these visitors look directly into the camera, reacting with smiles or an exclamation to their neighbor. At one point, the narrator reinforces that point by declaring, “The festival in Dakar took place more in the open than in the theater halls.” Perhaps this is why the film largely ignores the sprawling exhibitions of traditional and modern arts, as they were interior events, more static in nature, and less attended by the general populace.

Largely the film strikes a balance between featuring the African ensembles and highlighting the contributions that the Soviets made at the festival. Though the USSR’s lack of a sizeable Black population meant they could not officially participate, they established presence by other means—from loaning ships that served as auxiliary hotels for the overcrowded capital, to sending Guinean filmmaker Costa Diagne as their representative for the film competition. Further, in *African Rhythms*, the soundtrack alternates between balafons and drums, Russian Jewish/American pianist George Gershwin, and composers with orchestral flourishes à la Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff. The directors also show a copy of *Negro Art* (Искусство негров, 1919) which was distributed at the festival’s colloquium. Latvian artist Voldemārs Matvejs (pen name Vladimir Markov) wrote *Negro Art* as one of the first texts on sub-Saharan African sculpture which, according to the narrator, is “evidence of a long-standing interest and respect of our nation for the original African art.” Another extended scene shows Yevgeny Yevtushenko and Yevgeniy Dolmatovsky sitting in a salon with President Senghor. The lauded poets presented the Senegalese president with an anthology of his poems translated into Russian. Though they refrained from giving public readings during the festival, the Soviet poets traveled through Dakar in a limousine stocked with vodka—a ride they shared with celebrated poet Langston Hughes and William Greaves, the African-American filmmaker who had been tasked with creating a documentary of FESMAN for the United States Intelligence Agency (USIA).

The First World Festival of Negro Arts: An African-American Response

Though it would become the most circulated audiovisual record of FESMAN because of its commissioning body (USIA), the U.S.-produced film was directed by an African-American with a threadbare crew of two. Harlem-native William Greaves trained as an actor before moving to Canada to pursue filmmaking. With relatively few productions under his

belt, he relocated to the U.S. in the midst of the Civil Rights movement and directed for the USIA. On the heels of *Wealth of a Nation* (1964), he was tasked with documenting FESMAN so as to improve the foreign opinion of the U.S.' handling of race relations. Indeed, in situating his film between mounting Cold War politics and competing African-American agendas at the festival, Greaves crafted a personal vision that affirmed FESMAN as an important site for exchange. Though he was recruited to simply make a film for distribution in the American Cultural Centers of the world, Greaves ultimately gave space for the voices and visions of Blackness on either side of the Atlantic as they resonated and built off of each other.

Despite early enthusiasm from the American planning committee, critic Hoyt Fuller and others later decried the U.S. contingent as a carefully manicured vision of Blackness, stripped of the politics that animated many African-American creators (Fuller 1971, 92). Indeed, in the years to come, a complex relationship between the American Society of African Culture (AMSAC, the U.S. organizing committee for FESMAN) and the CIA became public. As this dynamic came to light, the question of government sponsorship and patronage versus government interference and propaganda might have even cast a light on Greaves' USIA-funded films, as the USIA started to look more like the propaganda arm of the Foreign Service, rather than an agency dedicated to international goodwill and cultural exchanges. Historians have addressed the role that cultural events like FESMAN could play as liminal spaces during the Cold War: semi-neutral grounds where adverse parties might briefly share the space of a colloquium, musical performance, poetry reading, or art exhibition (see Ratcliff 2014; Wofford 2018). To that end, it is not surprising that Greaves' film focused in particular on the American contingent of authors, singers, musicians, and artists at FESMAN.

At the rehearsal of the Alvin Ailey dance company, Greaves noted the scope of the Soviet film crew and the quality of their equipment. Recruiting his driver to run sound for the barebones production, Greaves had his team follow the Soviet crew in order to capture scenes under their lighting equipment. With these guerilla tactics, the American team delivered a *cinema-verité* production—sometimes even catching the Soviet cameramen within the frame. The footage alternates between light-hearted travelogue and austere reportage. A stark contrast to the polished full-color *African Rhythms*—a technology that was still relatively rare at the time—Greaves' film is monochromatic, light-footed, and inescapably personal.

One notable scene features the great jazz musician Duke Ellington, whose performance was a highlight of the festival (and noticeably absent from the Soviet film). In this scene, as Ellington pivots back and forth beside the bass player (Figure 7.4), Greaves unveils the *raison d'être* of

his film, pushing beyond the USIA's shallow expectations to reveal his own "Black perspective on reality" (Knee and Musser 1992, 17)—FESMAN was an opportunity to uncover universal qualities of the Black experience. While their history was marked by great expanses of space, forced relocation, and modern displacement, the reality of Black culture-making would be accessible in one defined locale for these three weeks. Instead of being spread across historical eras and scattered to far-flung geographies, the diversity of cultures, ancient kingdoms, and newly independent nations would be united under the umbrella of a single festival. Referring to Ellington, Greaves narrates, "3,000 miles and 400 years separate you from Africa... yet here you are to tell the world who I am." This visual is, in fact, a looped clip. Greaves employed this technique as a metaphor for return. Just as the musician steps forward and withdraws with each loop, so the festival witnessed the physical return of members from the African Diaspora and their eventual departure.⁴

Similarly, the work of U.S. visual artists is given extra screen time. From the abstract metal sculpture by Barbara Chase-Riboud, to the massive charcoal drawing by Charles White, these artworks welcome visitors of diverse skin tones, ethnicities, and garment styles. These artworks, and Greaves' film, fit into a larger constellation of forces that shaped a certain vision of American society for the world's consumption. The conservative artists and performers that AMSAC chose were



Figure 7.4 Still from William Greaves' *The First World Festival of Negro Arts* featuring Duke Ellington's performance at the stadium.

carefully curated to portray a positive image of the United States—even as many Black creators were embroiled in the Civil Rights movement.⁵ Similar to the covert funding of Abstract Expressionism in the 1950s, the CIA promoted a generally positive image of Black life. It is interesting to note that the USIA withheld authorial rights from the filmmakers, and prevented films from being distributed in the U.S. (ostensibly so as to not interfere with the American film industry's markets).⁶ Therefore, Greaves' *The First World Festival of Negro Arts* only circulated widely in African nations. In fact, it became the most-requested USIA film across American Cultural Centers in Africa for the next ten years. But if the events of the festival and Greaves' film could only be experienced outside of American soil, for whom was this vision of solidarity between Black Americans and the African continent? Even Ellington's participation was sponsored by the U.S. State Department through the Jazz Ambassadors program, an initiative that sent Black musicians abroad as Cold War diplomats while remaining apathetic to their want of basic rights at home (Von Eschen 2018).⁷ They similarly funded a last-minute stopover of the Alvin Ailey dancers who had been in Rome for a European tour (Kringelbach 2016, 80); Ailey only agreed because he was looking for an opportunity to perform in the USSR—an opportunity he received in 1970, with additional support from the U.S. State Department (Stott 2019). The web of state funding, cultural actors, and Cold War politics seems to spin ever more intricately. With these layers uncovered, how does one approach a sprawling cultural festival that facilitated such complex conversations with global ramifications? As this analysis of art and film evidences, a narrower lens can offer a nuanced discussion of how a festival operates as a site of convergence for previously-distant actors, rather than positioning it primarily as a nationalist event driven by state-sponsored ideologies. The nations represented in the contemporary art exhibition aimed to project a certain image, but the artists in attendance formed new networks that shaped transnational dialogues of Blackness for the next decade. Or, the USIA commissioned a film to win over African audiences, but their African-American filmmaker took the opportunity to imbed a personal vision for the new, jet-age dynamics between continents, races, and people. An emphasis on specific individual experiences ultimately recasts the state pomp and official narratives of such events to ascertain their discernable legacies.

Legacies: The Voices of FESMAN

FESMAN marked a turning point for Black voices, ideas, and creations, offering a nexus for exchange across continents and the diaspora. Dozens of dancers, from Haiti to Burundi to Togo, were reunited on a single stage. A world-class collection of African masterworks was culled from museums that have never since loaned objects to an exhibition on

the African continent. Greaves' film shows hundreds of books from Black authors at the festival's book fair, casting all of these accumulations as a new reservoir of knowledge. He narrates, "Continue the dialogue which has begun. The floodgates are being opened. Words are flowing freely here, washing away misunderstanding and misconception, uncovering the mystery that has been Africa." However, as we have seen, even with these noble aims, which were certainly advanced in many facets of FESMAN, there were competing state-level Cold War agendas unfolding at the festival. Just as the U.S. organized a polished veneer of race-consciousness to impress new African leaders, Soviet actors were actively wooing Africa's political and cultural spheres by foregrounding the Allies' imperial and colonial heritages. The state machinations are significant, and Hoyt Fuller's frustration toward U.S. censorship of critical Black voices was voiced shortly thereafter: "One of these days, the full awful story of the American secret service's role in the First World Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar in 1966 will be told, stripping of honor certain esteemed Black Americans who lent their prestige to the effort to hold to the barest minimum the political impact of that unprecedented event" (Fuller 1971, 92).

And yet, the story is not complete without amalgamating and incorporating the individual experiences. Remember, Langston Hughes, Williams Greaves, and Yevgeny Yevtushenko spent several amicable evenings drinking together and touring Dakar. Mercer Cook reflected on those dynamics: "Whatever the Russians expected in the way of rivalry never developed. Langston wouldn't allow it" (Rampersad 1988, 401). It is somewhat ironic that during a USIA-funded assignment Greaves built connections with parties on both sides of the Iron Curtain—even if his final film evinced a fairly patriotic, nostalgic vision of Africa. Where his film stands apart from *African Rhythms* is that it remains the most thorough audiovisual record of the historic festival made by a Black visitor—it is even narrated by his own voice. And though some have overstated the patriotism of Greaves' film, characterizing the coverage of festival events as if "they were Olympic medal contests," it is still a departure from the heavy-handed nature of earlier USIA films (Blake 2011, 50). Having already completed commissions for the USIA, Greaves later reflected on *The First World Festival of Negro Arts* recalling, "It was the first opportunity I had to make films that expressed a black perspective on reality" (Knee and Musser, 1992, 17).

The perspective expressed by the Soviet film becomes equally complex as individual narratives come to the surface. For example, the voice of *African Rhythms* narrator Ruvim Vygodskiy was actually famous across the Soviet Union because of his radio work during the Siege of Leningrad. Vygodskiy became a popular Russian Jewish broadcaster and worked for the CSDF for decades. But in 1976 he abruptly left the USSR after viewing the extreme anti-Semitism in the CSDF's *The Secret and the*

Obvious (1974). Though the state only recognized the film's themes as anti-Zionist and not anti-Semitic, Vygodskiy's disaffection had been brewing for years, after having narrated films like *We are Loyal to the Cause of Lenin and the Communist Party* (1973; Hayward Daily Review 1977). Though these two filmic records of FESMAN were generated from state sponsorship, the stories of Greaves and Vygodskiy underline the necessity of analyzing culture wars through personal lenses and encounters. If we essentialized these individuals to stand in for their respective government's agenda, we lose the nuance contained within records of the festival: filmic, textual, photographic, or otherwise. In recent years, historians have turned a fresh eye to such individual experiences and legacies from FESMAN: African-American historian Harold Weaver, who was a member of the USIA-USSR exchange program in 1959, participated in the World Youth Forum in Moscow in 1961 and worked as a journalist in the USSR from 1963–64 before attending FESMAN on AMSAC's chartered plane (Weaver 2015); or William Stott, the junior USIA officer who served as Greaves' liaison, who developed close friendships with Alvin Ailey and Hoyt Fuller and navigated the U.S. participation at FESMAN in the face of French disdain, recalling how "the French didn't want us mucking in their backyard" (Stott 2019).

As a coda, we return to Dakar for another perspective on the legacy of FESMAN and these films. In 2006, Senegalese music historian Bouna N'Diaye met William Greaves in North Carolina and learned about Greaves' film for FESMAN. As a child, N'Diaye heard the songs of FESMAN on the radio, though he did not attend the events in Dakar. Even so, the event has remained a point of pride for cultural actors in Senegal and it is often referred to as a landmark in the development of global African arts. As Greaves recounted his challenges in documenting the festival, the widespread lack of America's interest in Africa, and his co-opting of the Soviet film crew's equipment, N'Diaye concluded that the Senegalese government should acquire a copy of the technically superior Russian documentary (Greaves 1966; N'Diaye 2018).⁸ In fact, after viewing both films, N'Diaye felt that the USIA film was extremely sanitized: "the U.S. had no interest in letting the opposition, the Black Power, those problems, etc. come when we were calling for all the Black people of the diaspora. They came and showed a good face..." (N'Diaye 2018). In contrast, the Russian film was superior for its technical quality and its focus on the denizens, fashion, and sites of Dakar, meaning "this film might be [contemporary Senegalese people's] first exposure to that era" (N'Diaye 2018).

He worked for almost a decade to repatriate the Russian film. After years of lobbying, he was able to procure a copy, dub out Vygodskiy's voice for a Senegalese narrator, and screen it in Dakar just months before the festival's 50th anniversary and in the Daniel Sorano Theater—the

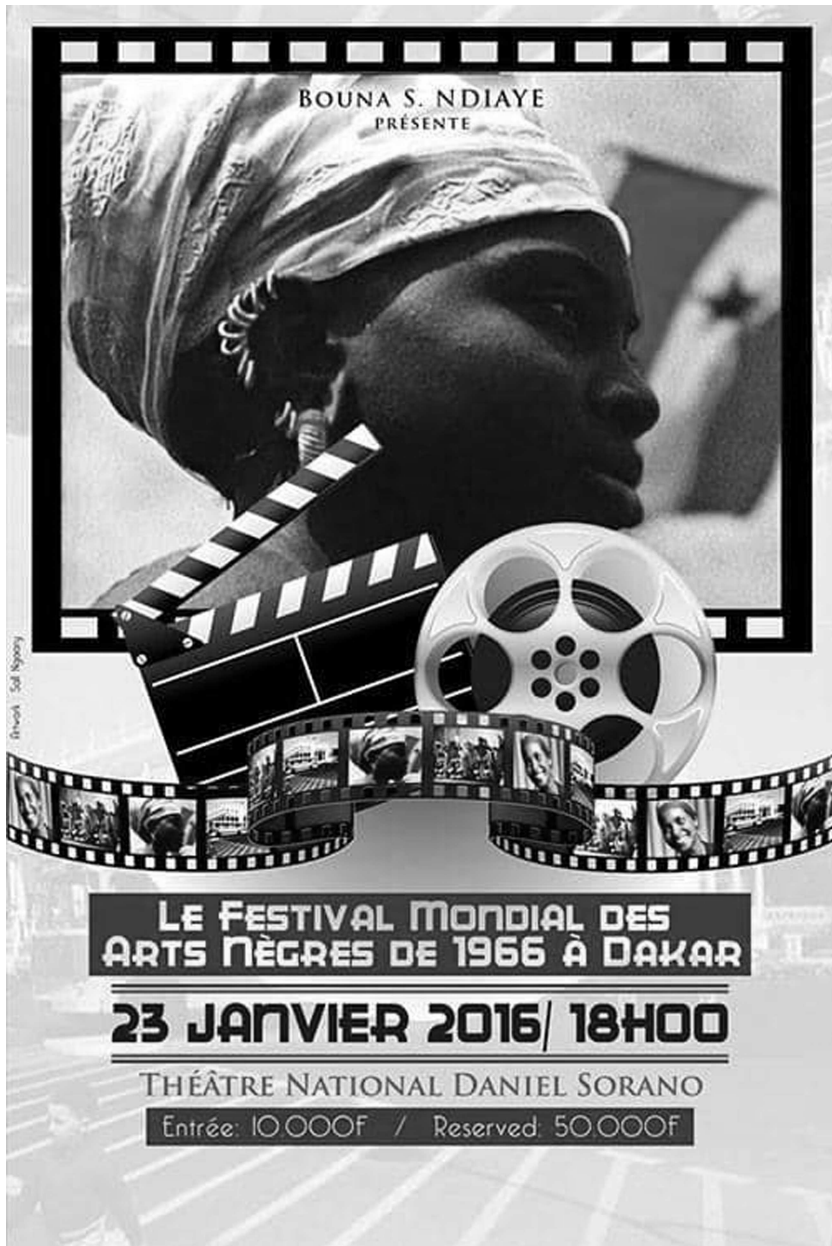


Figure 7.5 Poster for the screening of *African Rhythms* in Dakar, 2016.

same venue that was built for FESMAN and hosted the biggest dance performances (Figure 7.5). The ripple continues as N'Diaye develops his own documentary film, *Repatriation*, to chart the journey of *African Rhythms* as a piece of Senegal's cultural heritage that went to Russia in the 1960s, only to come back 50 years later. Similar to how Greaves' only gained the rights to his film in the 1990s, these are just two records from FESMAN that have taken on significant afterlives and challenged the initial reports and collective memories.

As these films gain broader audiences from digitization, screenings, and inclusion in new exhibitions, or as we mine the lives of the pioneering modern artists in *Trends and Confrontations* to elucidate their networks, what is uncovered gives new, fuller perspectives from the complex web of visions and voices that sought to influence audiences about independent Africa in the 1960s. From the perspectives of individual artists, critics, and visitors, the scale of convergence and exchange at FESMAN becomes endlessly labyrinthine—a trait we should regard as positive, as it invites us to constantly revisit such sites for the connections yet to be uncovered.

Notes

- 1 Between 1978 and 1983, he directed films for state visits from Angola, Mauritius, the People's Republic of Congo, and Nigeria.
- 2 Though a popular image and symbol from Gorée Island, the “door of no return” likely saw very few slaves pass through. However, the mythology around this door does not discount its significance as a site of remembrance. Atwood 2012.
- 3 A line from Senghor's poem “Prières aux masques africaines” (1966).
- 4 For a fuller analysis of Greaves' film, and the role it plays in his oeuvre at large, see my chapter, “Views Across the Atlantic: An American Vision of the First World Festival of Negro Arts,” in the forthcoming text, *William Greaves* (Columbia University Press, 2021).
- 5 American ambassador to Senegal Mercer Cook later lamented that “the greatest cause of [America's] unfavorable ‘image’ in Africa is the racial situation. This is ironical because the riots in Watts and elsewhere, the police dogs in Birmingham... loom larger in African eyes than all the history-making progress in recent years.” Cook as cited Blake 2011, 51.
- 6 Even beyond filmmakers' dissatisfaction with this policy, critics lamented the lack of accessibility to USIA productions. Crowther 1964.
- 7 Though cultural diplomacy was supposed to be separate from the propaganda, as directed by the State Department and the USIA, respectively, things were inevitably muddled as diplomacy and propaganda were implemented by the same staff members across the U.S. diplomatic posts. This inherently complicates the motivations behind either organization's productions. Fosler-Lussier 2015, 9.
- 8 N'Diaye ultimately dismissed the Italian and American productions “because of the way they are done. The quality is not there... though [Greaves'] would resonate with people here because of the jazz aspect.” There were also documentaries created by Romanian and Italian representatives, and one by Senegalese filmmaker P.S. Vieyra.

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8 *В Сенегале (In Senegal)* *and Ритмы Африки* *(African Rhythms)*

Soviet Documentaries on Senegal during the Cold War

Gesine Drews-Sylla

The two documentaries *В Сенегале (In Senegal)* and *Ритмы Африки* (titled *African Rhythms* in English, literally *Rhythms of Africa*) are films that were realized by the Soviet Union at crucial points in Senegalese post-independence history that mark changes in paradigm closely connected to Cold War dynamics.¹ Senegal became an independent state in 1960. Immediately after independence, the postcolonial political orientation remained under internal debate. The initial Mali Federation (Fédération du Mali) lasted only two months and led to the creation of two new states, Mali and Senegal. Both were formally non-aligned. However, Mali's leader Modibo Keita pursued a closer alliance with the Soviet Bloc and proposed a socialist orientation. Léopold Sédar Senghor, poet, philosopher of Négritude, and Senegal's first president, kept a close alliance with the former colonial power France, and thus with the West, even though Senghor also proposed a type of African socialism closely linked to Négritude. Senghor's socialism diverged so strikingly from the Soviet model that it became more of an adversary than an ally in the binary world of the Cold War.²

In many African countries, the Cold War became a hot one but this was not the case in Senegal. The tensions that led to the breakup of the Mali Federation were resolved without the outbreak of uncontrolled violence and brutal proxy wars. In Senegal, struggles over the country's future orientation did not erupt until two years later. Mamadou Dia (1910–2009), who had already served as the vice premier of the Mali Federation, became Senegal's prime minister in 1960. Like Keita in Mali, Dia was a more radical socialist. In June 1962, he undertook a long diplomatic journey to several countries of the Eastern Bloc, including the Soviet Union. Subsequently, diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Senegal were established in 1962. However, in December 1962, the differences between Senghor and Dia led to an open confrontation that was eventually won by Senghor.

No production date appears in the short, 20-minute documentary *In Senegal*. Based on the events shown in the film, it is safe to assume that it must have been made during this period of political struggle. In the documentary's storyline, Senegal is shown celebrating its independence. Within this narrative, the festivities coincide with Gagarin's flight into space on April 12, 1961. Consequently, the film must have been completed after April 1961, but before Mamadou Dia's dismissal from office, because Dia is still shown as the Senegalese prime minister. Given this overall framework, I will offer a reading of the film as proposing a Soviet-inspired path for the future of an independent Senegal that ultimately would not be realized. Given the quality of the film, it can be seen as a Soviet Cold War investment made while the direction of the new African country was still under internal debate. It also seems likely that the film was commissioned as part of the preparations in the broader context of Dia's journey to the Soviet Union, which led to the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between Senegal and the Soviet Union (but ultimately did not lead to the country's alliance with the Soviet Bloc).

Half a year after the formal establishment of diplomatic relations, during Dia's journey to the Eastern Bloc in June 1962, Andrei Erofeev (1920–2011), the father of the writer Viktor Erofeev, was appointed as the first Soviet ambassador to Senegal in January 1963. The choice of him as ambassador seems as calculated a move as the installment of Mercer Cook (1903–1987) as the U.S. ambassador to Senegal in 1964. Cook was one of the very few African Americans to serve in the U.S. diplomatic corps at such a high level. His appointment has been considered as a sign of commitment from the Kennedy administration to Senghor, acknowledging the latter's reputation not only as a politician but also as a poet and philosopher. Cook, himself a professor of French studies at Howard University, a poet, and an intellectual, was personally acquainted with Senghor and other leading Senegalese cultural figures of the independence era such as Alioune Diop (founder of the influential journal *Présence africaine* and publishing house of the same name), Birago Diop (well-known Négritude writer and collector of folktales), and Ousmane Socé Diop (novelist and Senegalese ambassador to the U.S.)—relationships dating back to their days as students and young intellectuals in Paris during the interwar years (Murphy 2016, 20). Finally, Cook was the translator of Senghor's works into English.

In a different sense, the Soviet choice for the post of ambassador, Andrei Erofeev, was no less of an accomplished cultural figure in his own right. He was a generation younger than Cook and therefore not personally acquainted with the Parisian-African diaspora of the interwar times. In 1955–59, he served as cultural attaché of the Soviet Union in France, before becoming ambassador to Senegal in 1963. Like Cook, he had worked as a translator, serving, before his time in Paris, as Stalin's personal French interpreter.³

Although Cook and Erofeev were to quit their respective posts in the summer of 1966, Cook only a few days after Erofeev, both of them were still in office when the singular event that can be hailed as the apotheosis of Senegalese post-independence cultural politics was staged in Dakar. The Premier Festival mondial des arts nègres / First World Festival of Negro Arts, meticulously designed to be bilingual, took place between April 1 and 24, 1966. The festival was formally organized under the auspices of UNESCO, and largely funded by the Senegalese and French governments, nevertheless, the dynamics of the Cold War informed many of the actors.

The Soviet perspective of the festival can be gleaned from *African Rhythms*, a bright and colorful documentation of the event with a Russian commentary.⁴ It is not the only film made about the festival. The U.S. Information Agency had originally commissioned the African-American filmmaker William Greaves to produce a 5-minute news clip and eventually funded his long black-and-white documentary, released under the title *The First World Festival of Negro Arts*, which was hardly ever to be screened in the U.S. (Jaji 2014, 92–93). The Italian Sergio Bertolli made a black-and-white film titled *Il festival di Dakar* that was also released in 1966.⁵ The Romanians V. Catolescu and C. Ionescu-Tonciu were commissioned by the UNESCO to produce the film *Rythmes et Images: Impressions du Premier Festival mondial des arts nègres—Dakar* shot in color on 16 mm.⁶ Lastly, a film made by the African film pioneer Paulin Soumanou Vieyra titled *Le Sénégal au Festival mondial des arts nègres* seems to have been lost (Murphy 2016, 7–8).

The tensions of the Cold War are most readily apparent in the Soviet and the U.S. documentaries on the festival, Tsitsi Ella Jaji (2014, 92–96) and David Murphy (2016, 29–33) have argued. While both authors also discuss the Soviet film, their primary focus rests on the U.S. side and how the “US State Department used the festival to demonstrate America’s commitment to racial equality, the nation’s global reputation having suffered during the protracted Civil Rights struggle back home” (Murphy 2016, 31). In a similar vein, Jaji notes: “The long close-up of the American flag that precedes shots of the Senegalese and other flags (although not of the French flag in spite of the significant subsidy the French were providing) is one of the clearest indications that this film was to serve as a tool of U.S. Cold War propaganda” (Jaji 2014, 95). In the following sections, I will add to the discussion opened by Jaji and Murphy from a Soviet perspective. I will contextualize *African Rhythms* and relate it to the earlier documentary *In Senegal*, thus drawing attention to subtle shifts in paradigm.

In Senegal: Celebrating Independence, Advocating the Soviet Path

The main narrative of the documentary *In Senegal* parallels the main points outlined in several articles featured in two issues of *Азия и Африка*

сегодня (*Africa and Asia Today*), a journal issued by the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, which published articles by experts on Asian and African countries and aimed at a more specialized audience. The 1960 October issue features an article by S. Gipp, a geologist who visited Dakar while traveling to Africa on a Soviet research vessel (Гипп 1960). The article's line of argumentation suggests that the voyage was undertaken before Senegalese independence, but there is no clear indication. The structure of the article is typical for many Soviet narratives on Senegal that were to follow henceforth.

First, Gipp gives a brief historical overview that highlights the long history of colonialism and slavery that Senegal had to endure. He then goes on to point out the significance of Île de Gorée located off the shore of Dakar as one of the centers of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. This emphasis on Gorée would become typical for Soviet narratives on Senegal, but it is not a Soviet construct. French colonial administration had already considered using the memory of the slave trade connected with Gorée and planned to develop a thematic tourist site. After independence, Gorée and especially the Maison des Esclaves with its somberly moving open door facing the ocean, the so-called Door of No Return, became one of the main symbols of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The Maison des Esclaves was renovated and turned into a museum.⁷ Gipp's Soviet emphasis on the somber symbolic meaning of this door would become a powerful image in many Soviet comments on Senegal.⁸

Gipp's article is characterized by a juxtaposition that would also become typical for Soviet narratives on Senegal. It confronts the separate worlds of the white French and the local African population. On the one side, there is the luxurious colonial Plateau with the central Place Protet named after the colonial founder of Dakar and governor of Senegal from 1850 to 1855, Auguste Léopold Protet (1808–1862). On the other side there is the Medina, the quarter that colonial authorities planned for the African population. The African quarter is pictured as a vibrant trading place with horrible living conditions. Nevertheless, Gipp detects a joy of living expressed in street music and drum beats. In conclusion, Gipp states that there is no blatant discrimination against Africans in Senegal, as opposed to South Africa. On the contrary, local authorities make an effort to showcase the equality of all segments of the population. However, no white person can be seen doing manual labor, no white person dwells in shanty huts, no white person is to be found in buses taken by black people. Even the French admit that Africans are paid far less, Gipp reports, adding that the French despised the Russians for taking the buses together with Africans. Hence, the white minority is clearly privileged. The Soviet visitor, however, displays unconstrained solidarity with the Africans.

The same issue of *Asia and Africa Today* features an article by the Senegalese writer Ousmane Sembène who subsequently, after his internship

in Moscow with Soviet film director Mark Donskoi, went on to become the so-called father of African film. His contribution “Литературу Африки—народу!” (“The literature of Africa—to the people!”; Усман⁹ 1960) discusses African literature as an ancient and thriving literary system that was severely damaged by imperialism. As a consequence, African literature lost its connection to the people and became reactionary, a development which Sembène seeks to combat with progressive writing. In his view, reading and writing are therefore always political, and literature a weapon for social impact (“оружие социального воздействия,” Усман 1960, 43).¹⁰

In 1960, Gipp’s article still fulminates against the French colonial administration even though it was published after the breakup of the Mali Federation and the creation of a Senegalese state. Only one year later, in 1961, arguments very similar to those found in Gipp’s article are directed against the government of the newly independent Senegal. In November 1961, *Asia and Africa Today* features another travel report written by V. Kuznetsov (Кузнецов 1961) who was visiting Senegal and Mali as part of a Soviet tourist group. His description of Senegal follows the same formula used by Gipp the previous year. It proceeds, however, to paint a gloomy picture of the country that opted for a closer connection with the West. It highlights the division between the French and the African populations and it also mentions the history of Gorée. In general, Kuznetsov finds a discernible continuity with the old colonial structures. The country is perceived as only seemingly independent and still governed by external forces.

Mali, on the contrary, the country that opted for the Soviet way, experienced significant development in this first year after the breakup of the Mali Federation, according to Kuznetsov. The young state is described as energetic, orderly, functional, and full of progress. Kuznetsov observes an atmosphere of friendliness and hospitality, encounters people studying Russian, and striving to get to know Soviet guests. The group meets young people eager to go to the Soviet Union for their education. All in all, Kuznetsov concludes that the population of Mali has taken control of its destiny, governing its own affairs for itself.

The documentary *In Senegal* should be understood as situated in between these two issues of *Asia and Africa Today*, both literally in terms of time, but also within the dynamics of the Cold War as they expressed themselves in Senegal during the independence period. The film captures the short-lived moment of enthusiasm and political equilibrium during the celebrations of Senegalese independence, while indirectly advocating a future for the new state along a Soviet path. Overall, it follows the same formula as the two travel accounts and Ousmane Sembène’s contributions to *Asia and Africa Today* and transfers their constructs into visual images. One of the most striking examples for this strategy is the visual emphasis on Gorée and the Door of No Return in the first sections of the film.

Central to the film are the festivities on the occasion of the Senegalese national holiday celebrated on the founding date of the Mali Federation in April 1961 and commemorating Senegalese independence since 1960. One of the symbols of the new independence introduced and depicted in the film is the renaming of Dakar's central Place Protet to Place de l'Indépendance. Although the celebration of Senegalese sovereignty gives occasion to the film and forms its core, these celebrations do not constitute the framing of its narrative. Instead, this framework is created by featuring the writer Ousmane Sembène who is shown three times. In the very beginning, he is introduced as a writer, whose novel *Ô pays, mon beau peuple!* (1957) has already been translated into several languages of the Soviet Bloc—Russian, Bulgarian, and Romanian—as the film illustrates by showing these books (Figure 8.1).

Sembène himself does not speak in the film. The function attributed to him is that of a representative of the Senegalese people, whose political awareness he raises with his literature in the same sense that he himself outlined in his contributions to *Asia and Africa Today*. After having been introduced in his double role as writer and representative of the ordinary people, in his second appearance in the middle of the documentary, he is



Figure 8.1 Translations of Ousmane Sembène's *Ô Pays, mon beau Peuple!* (1957) into languages of the Soviet Bloc (screenshot, *In Senegal*). Courtesy of the Russian State Film and Photo Archive.

shown performing these roles in unceasing conversations with fellow Senegalese. In a sense, he becomes an embodiment of the notion of education which is a decisive one for the whole narrative.

The role of the educator is ascribed to Sembène in a distinctly localized setting. The second time Sembène is shown, he appears in the Medina. Like Gipp's and Kuznetsov's travel reports, *In Senegal* relies upon the sharp distinction between a white, French imperial space opposed to an African one. Here too, the imperial space is marked by the French colonial quarters of Dakar, by industry in French hands, by a certain way of living: the street cafés and the easy availability of consumer goods, good houses and excellent living conditions, and, above all, easy access to education.¹² Just as in the two travel reports, this world is juxtaposed to the Medina, the African quarters. It is characterized by manual labor (in contrast to industry), poverty (in contrast to French luxury), and especially inaccessibility of proper education.¹³ All of this deprives the Senegalese people of their creative and innovative potentials. Visually, it is again Gorée and the emblematic Door of No Return leading to the Atlantic Ocean that sum up and symbolize the argument.¹⁴ All in all, the narrative establishes a straight and typically Soviet line of argument. According to the logics of Soviet ideology, imperialism causes backwardness via economic and cultural exploitation, which can only be tackled by introducing socialism.

Sports and technology feature among the most important cultural fields within which the conflicts of the Cold War were fought. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the documentary draws abundantly on these two fields. For instance, Soviet delegates are shown with children on their laps during a sports event, thus representing the Senegalese future.

In April 1961, when the Soviet Union shocked the Western world with Iurii Gagarin's orbital space flight, it had seemingly won one of the ongoing Cold War competitions—the race into space. This triumph forms the apotheosis of the narrative of *In Senegal*. In one of the last scenes, it shows Ousmane Sembène again (Figure 8.4), reportedly captivated by the news of Gagarin's and, by extension, Soviet success (Figures 8.2–8.4). Thus, the narrative implicitly associates education for everybody, excellence in sports and technology, economic development, and liberation from colonial backwardness with Soviet achievements while ostensibly celebrating Senegalese independence. Sembène becomes the embodiment of a bright future, the counterpoint to the Door of No Return.

The film does not explicitly call for Soviet-style socialism. Rather, it utilizes one of the key phrases of the day—development through education—and transfers it to the Soviet relationship with the Global South. Consequently, the Soviet civilizing mission is inscribed into the narrative in a variety of ways, advocating for an orientation towards the Soviet side of the Cold War divide.



Figure 8.2 Narrative link between Iurii Gagarin's orbital flight and Ousmane Sembène (screenshots, *In Senegal*). Courtesy of the Russian State Film and Photo Archive.¹¹



Figure 8.3 Narrative link between Iurii Gagarin's orbital flight and Ousmane Sembène (screenshots, *In Senegal*). Courtesy of the Russian State Film and Photo Archive.



Figure 8.4 Narrative link between Iurii Gagarin's orbital flight and Ousmane Sembène (screenshots, *In Senegal*). Courtesy of the Russian State Film and Photo Archive.

African Rhythms: Celebrating African Culture the Soviet Way

In the five years that had passed since the filming of *In Senegal*, Ousmane Sembène, who had played such a key role in the documentary, had gone on to shoot his first films after training in the art of filmmaking under Mark Donskoi in the Soviet Union. Surprisingly, *African Rhythms*, the documentary on the First World Festival of Negro Arts does not feature him at all, although Sembène had been awarded one of the prizes of the festival's competitions, the "Prix au meilleur réalisateur de long métrage africain de fiction," for his film *La Noire de ... (Black Girl)*.¹⁵

After years of preparation (Murphy 2016, 19), the festival—a watershed in many respects—took place in Dakar from April 1 to 24, 1966.¹⁶ It was "a modern cultural event on an unprecedented scale in Africa [featuring] more than 2,500 artists, musicians, performers and writers" (Murphy 2016, 3) and 600 works of African art (Vincent 2016, 57).¹⁷ As Murphy states, "the list of [the festival's] participants reads like a 'who's who' of some of the greatest black cultural figures of the early and mid-twentieth century" (Murphy 2016, 3). The festival was devoted to celebrating the high arts of Africa and the African diasporas, bringing together thirty African countries and six countries with a significant African diaspora (Murphy 2016, 4). While the festival was

surrounded by a number of controversies, as with any major cultural event, it not only constituted an apotheosis of Négritude thought but also showcased the elevated status that was attributed to culture during the 1960s and the euphoric post-independence period. The culture was believed to offer a third way in the binary world of the Cold War, and the African countries were to be its avant-garde:

While the Soviets and the Americans raced to conquer space, the “black world” was gathered together to find its soul. In essence, the festival sought to situate culture at the heart of the post-imperial world. Leaders of these emerging postcolonial countries had famously gathered in Bandung in 1955 and Senghor’s close ally, Alioune Diop, founder of the *Présence Africaine* journal and publishing house, dreamed of [...] [an intellectual Bandung for Africa] [...]: the political revolution would now be accompanied by a philosophical and cultural revolution.

(Murphy 2016, 2)

In this situation, the Cold War significantly informed the strategies of many actors, as Tsitsi Jaji and Murphy have highlighted. Both the U.S. and the Soviet Union were eager to contribute to the festival’s aims, but were both trapped in the rigid logic of a global geopolitical confrontation, and the necessity of reacting to internal developments at the same time. In the U.S., the Civil Rights movement was at its height, while the USSR was dealing with the dynamics that had been set in motion by the politics of Khrushchev’s Thaw.

The U.S. delegation was partially funded by the CIA “who wanted to use the festival to promote a positive image of the USA in Africa” (Murphy 2016, 30). But the Soviet side was also under pressure to make a good impression. Jaji and Murphy both comment on the poet Evgenii Evtushenko’s visit to the festival that is highlighted in *African Rhythms*. Evtushenko was part of the so-called *shestidesiatniki*, the generation of the sixties consisting of poets, writers, filmmakers, and painters who pushed the liberal limits of the Soviet Thaw period—now approaching its end by the time of the Dakar festival. Some of them, like Evtushenko, held very ambivalent positions within Soviet society. Their cautious criticism of Soviet state ideology challenged the political authorities. At the same time, Evtushenko was so popular that he filled stadiums reciting his poetry. Thus, he was one of the few Soviet citizens allowed to travel abroad.

Jaji comments on an impassioned and apparently very convivial encounter between Evtushenko and Langston Hughes during the festival and contextualizes it within the dynamics of the Cold War. Their meeting, she concludes, transcended the binarism of the divided world (Jaji 2014, 105). It is worth noting that their encounter was not as unexpected as one might think given the fact that in 1932 Hughes had

traveled extensively in the Soviet Union, including Central Asia. In 1965, the Afro-Russian Africanist Lily Golden (then Lil'ia Khanga) had published an essay on historical presence of black people in Russia and the Soviet Union in the November issue of *Asia and Africa Today* (Ханра 1965). On the occasion of the festival, the essay was translated and published in a French version (Golden-Hanga [1966]).

Golden was the daughter of Oliver Golden, an African American, and Marta Bialek, who is of Polish-Jewish descent. Both had emigrated to the Soviet Union in 1931 and settled in Central Asia as part of the generation of the so-called Red Pilgrims, usually left-wing African Americans on a quest for a better life. They were trying their luck in the first state in the world ideologically committed to anti-imperialism and anti-racism during the 1920s and 30s (cf. e.g. Carew 2010). Lily Golden, who acted as a consultant for *African Rhythms*, had not yet been born when Hughes visited the Soviet Union. However, given the circumstances—even if Golden were not part of the Soviet delegation—it seems perfectly natural that Golden forms a link between Hughes, who was of her father's generation, and the Soviet delegation that facilitated the encounter between Hughes and Evtushenko.

In any case, it is rather unlikely that the Soviets had actually sent out a controversial figure like Evtushenko in order to provoke rivalry between the U.S. and the Soviet delegations as has been assumed (Jaji 2014, 105). However, according to U.S. ambassador Mercer Cook's recollections of the festival,¹⁸ these expectations of tensions between Langston Hughes and the Soviets never existed. It is indeed quite possible that Evtushenko's visit to the festival in Dakar might not have been initiated by Soviet authorities, but rather on Senghor's initiative. The ambassador Erofeev's wife, Galina Erofeeva, wrote in her memoir that Senghor originally wanted to invite both Evtushenko and Bella Akhmadulina, who was an equally well-known poet and representative of the *shestidesiatniki* (Ерофеева 1998, 191). This was, however, prevented by the Central Committee in Moscow that instead decided to send the conservative Evgenii Dolmatovskii who qualified because he had written several poems on Africa published in 1961 in the weekly illustrated magazine for popular readership *Огонёк* (*Spark*) (Долматовский 1961), but who was, most importantly, loyal to party principles. So, in the end, Dakar saw one liberal and one conservative Soviet poet. This Soviet ideological compromise is documented in *African Rhythms* when it shows both Evtushenko and Dolmatovskii engaged in a conversation with Senghor in the presidential office, supposedly discussing Senghor's poems recently translated into Russian (Figure 8.5).

Jaji and Murphy highlight that Greaves' U.S. documentary was eager to avoid any references to slavery and, therefore did not include any footage of one of the main events of the festival, *Spectacle féérique de Gorée*. This *son et lumière* show, produced by Jean Mazel based



Figure 8.5 Evgeni Evtushenko and Evgenii Dolmatovskii in discussion with Léopold Sédar Senghor (screenshot, *African Rhythms*). Courtesy of the Russian State Film and Photo Archive.

on a script by Dakar-based Haitian poet Jean Briere, depicted the island's history replete with references to its role in the trans-Atlantic slave trade.¹⁹ The Soviet documentary equally omitted pictures that did not fit into its political agenda. Greaves' film pays almost excessive attention to the arrival and reception of the Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie in Dakar whom *African Rhythms* does not feature at all. In Greaves' film, Selassie is presented as a prophetic symbol for a free Africa, thus deploying a trope with regard to Ethiopia that was quite common during the pre- and post-independence era. For the Soviet side, Haile Selassie, a monarch who traced his legitimacy back to the biblical King Solomon, could not possibly constitute a positive symbol for a postcolonial Africa. Haile Selassie himself was overthrown in a *coup d'état* in 1974 which turned Ethiopia into one of the hot sites of the Cold War: the reign of the emperor was succeeded by the bloody Marxist-Leninist regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam.

Jaji describes in much detail the extent to which the U.S. documentary "was designed to present an American and specifically State Department perspective" (Jaji 2014, 94). As she notes, the film almost exclusively mentions African Americans or Westerners by name, focusing on Langston Hughes, Duke Ellington, or Marpessa Dawn instead of Senghor, while

spotlighting the American flag. The atmosphere of the whole documentary is characterized by a solemn, almost biblical voice-over by Greaves himself. Beyond this framing, Greaves' film can be understood as a contribution to the aims of the festival in its own right. It is, in many senses, more than a documentation of the festival; rather it engages in the festival's overall aims and performs its own search for the essence of the African soul from the perspective of an African American embracing and transcending Négritude.

The Soviets equally strove to demonstrate their engagement with the festival's goals both materially and ideologically even though they were struggling with Négritude. The Soviet Union did not lend any artworks and only sent photographs (Vincent 2016, 56), but it contributed a large hotel cruise ship in order to aid with accommodation for the visitors of the festival.²⁰ The organizing committee had also asked for boats for the transfer of passengers between Dakar and Île de Gorée.²¹ Furthermore, the Soviet embassy published its own journal which focused on aspects connected to the First World Festival of Negro Arts in several issues in 1966.²² Another contribution to the festival was Lily Golden's research on black people in Russia published in *Asia and Africa Today* and the French translation of the essay.

In the Soviet Union, *Asia and Africa Today* and *Spark* extensively covered the festival.²³ Lily Golden's essay was published in the September issue's special focus on the historic dimension of interactions between Russia and Africa. In anticipation of the festival in Dakar, the December issue contained an announcement of the festival within an entire series on African culture ("Голоса и краски Африки" [Voices and colors of Africa]). Once the festival had taken place, the Soviet press made it accessible to a broader public. In 1966, *Spark* published several notes, reports, and travel accounts on the festival and Senegal (Сербин а-е).

However, the most impressive document of the Soviet engagement with the festival's aims is certainly the colorful and vibrant documentary *African Rhythms*. The main line of narrative that structured the earlier *In Senegal* can still be perceived. Like *In Senegal*, *African Rhythms* comments on the country's long colonial history, utilizing images of Île de Gorée and the Maison des Esclaves with the Door of No Return as illustrative visual material. However, the focus on development through education and the juxtaposition of Plateau and Medina which structured the reports from the early 1960s was dropped.

Following the festival's goals, the entire narrative shifted towards the notion of culture. The narration emphasizes that African cultures and arts, brutally compartmentalized and suppressed by colonialism, were peacefully reunited. Senegal's rejection of a Soviet orientation after the breakup of the Mali Federation, which earlier had elicited such disapproval in the reportages published in *Asia and Africa Today*, now received scant notice. On the contrary, Senghor is even given a whole

page in the March issue of 1966 in order to present his vision of Négritude (Сенгор 1966). In the film *African Rhythms*, Russian translations of Senghor's poems are shown, thus concentrating on him more as a man of culture than as a politician.

Whereas Greaves' U.S. documentary strove to construct a picture that showcased an African American point of view that omitted any critical account of the history of slavery, the Soviet documentary constructed a long-standing historical Russian-Soviet interest in African culture that the film is meant to document. This becomes most evident in some of the first sections of *African Rhythms* that are no less emblematic than the flags in the first shots of the U.S. film. After a brief general presentation of the festival and Dakar, the Soviet film shifts its focus to the opening colloquium which was held in the National Assembly. During the colloquium, as the narrative both verbally and visually shows, the Soviet delegation demonstrates the long interest that the Soviet Union held for African art—supposedly in contrast to the colonial powers—by presenting the work of the Latvian photographer, painter, and art theoretician Voldemārs Matvejs who had published under the pen name of Vladimir Markov. Shortly before his early death in 1914, Matvejs had written a book on African art (*Искусство негров*) that was published posthumously in 1919 and, partially because of Stalinist censorship, had been subsequently forgotten (cf. Howard, Bužinska, and Strother 2015).

In *Asia and Africa Today*, Matvejs' book is also featured in an article which is even more explicit than the film (Хуторнов 1966). Here, the book offered by the Soviet delegation to their hosts is called “a sensation,” because Matvejs's book was written before Carl Einstein's *Negerplastik* (1915). Matvej himself is presented as “the first Russian Africanist and art historian” (“первый русский искусствовед-африканист”). So, in a way, Matvejs takes over Gagarin's place. While in the earlier documentary *In Senegal* Gagarin symbolized Soviet superiority in technology, in *African Rhythms* Matvejs is appropriated in order to demonstrate the Soviet antecedence and superiority in the theoretical discussion of African art. It must be added that Matvejs' book stems from an interest in non-European art forms that he shared with his contemporaries in Paris or Berlin. The book is certainly no proof of Soviet interest in African art, but rather of the entangledness of imperial Russian culture with trans-European discourses.

Within inner-Soviet dynamics this emphasis on Matvejs' work, however, refers to the changes of paradigm that had taken place. Even though virtually unknown, Matvejs' theoretical work had had an impact on the development of Russian and Soviet avant-garde art. This makes the reference in *African Rhythms* a subtle, albeit striking approbation of non-socialist realist paradigms in the film's subtext. Just like Evtushenko's journey to Senegal, this only became possible because of the shifts brought about by the Soviet Thaw period.²⁴ Therefore, *African Rhythms* is as

much a product of the Thaw period as of the Cold War, just as Greaves' film testifies to both the Cold War and *ex negativo* to the Civil Rights struggle.

In conclusion, *African Rhythms* can be read not only as a product of the Cold War, but also of the Thaw period, but in the end, this is also true for *In Senegal*. After all, it was the historical coincidence of decolonization and Thaw period that stirred Soviet interest in Africa during the Cold War era and the superpowers' search for zones of influence all over the world. Consequently, both films document in bright colors Soviet Cold War positions towards the Global South throughout the 1960s.

Notes

- 1 I would like to express my gratitude to Alexander Markov for drawing my attention to these films.
- 2 For the vision of an African socialism and criticism of both U.S. and Soviet Union cf. Senghor's seminal speech on "Nationhood" in 1959 (Senghor 2001).
- 3 Cf. his son Viktor's double biography *Хороший Сталин* (*The Good Stalin*) (Ерофеев 2004) which traces Andrei Erofeev's life in the form of a novel.
- 4 Cf. Joseph L. Underwood's chapter in this book for further information on the Russian commentator Ruvim Vygodskii. Underwood also addresses the perpetuation of colonial representational practices in the Soviet film, which focuses mainly on dance while ignoring major parts of the festival. Neveu Kringelbach 2016 points out that many colonial stereotypes can still be found even in the official rhetoric of the festival.
- 5 At the time of writing of this chapter the film was available on <https://vimeo.com/135843095> (accessed 9 August 2019).
- 6 Cf. Chicago Film Archives 2013, Musée du Quai Branly Jacques Chirac 2016.
- 7 Cf. e.g. Bocoum and Toulhier 2013.
- 8 Charles Forsdick (2014, 141–144) comments more extensively on the visualization of Gorée in different media during the 20th century and in recent films.
- 9 Ousmane Sembène published many of his earlier books and also his articles in *Asia and Africa Today* under his inversed name Sembène Ousmane. I will not change this order and treat it accordingly in citations and the bibliography.
- 10 *Asia and Africa Today* offers an example of this doctrine in 1962. In one issue, it features a Russian translation of Ousmane Sembène's story "Chaïba" ("Мой друг алжирец") (Усман 1962) which was also published in French in the collection *Voltaïque* in 1962 (Sembène 1992, 123–126).
- 11 The subtitles translate the Russian commentary as follows: "During the celebrations, news of the Soviet pilot Yuri Gagarin's [Figure 8.2] unprecedented space flight reached distant Senegal [Figure 8.3]. This remarkable event also caught the imagination of writer Ousmane Sembene [Figure 8.4]."
- 12 For the role of education in Soviet Cold War diplomacy more generally, compare, for instance Katsakioris 2019.
- 13 The opposition between Medina and Plateau also structures Sembène's very first film *Borom Sarret* (1963) realized shortly afterwards which I discuss in a contribution to a forthcoming special issue of *Présence francophone* on Ousmane Sembène. *Borom Sarret* generally shows many intertextualities

- with Soviet discourse and film making. Cf. Julie-Françoise Tolliver's chapter in this book for Sembène's re-writing of Soviet "tractor art."
- 14 For the role of the metaphor of "backwardness" and the subsequent development of an "affirmative action empire" in Soviet history cf. Martin 2001. *In Senegal* can be read as proposing to transfer this model onto the relationship between the Soviet Union and Senegal.
 - 15 Nor is the Guinean Costa Diagne shown who had graduated from the State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) in Moscow in 1965 with his film *Люди танца: Монолог маски* (*Men of the Dance: The Monologue of the Masque*) realized together with Mikhail Vartanov as a response to Chris Marker's *Les statues meurent aussi* (*The Statues also Die*) and who was also awarded a prize at the festival ("Prix du meilleur film sur l'art nègre, quel que soit son auteur"). There is hardly any information available on Costa Diagne, however, some can be found in Salti and Chomentowski 2018; additional details are provided in Parajanov-Vartanov Institute, n.d.
 - 16 Cf. Joseph L. Underwood's chapter in this book for more detailed information about participants and the festival's overall structure.
 - 17 The art exhibition was shown in the Musée Dynamique, in a building that had been erected solely for this purpose. Today, it houses the Senegalese Supreme Court. Cf. Vincent 2016.
 - 18 Joseph L. Underwood cites the quote in his chapter.
 - 19 Cf. in more detail Quinn 2016; Bush 2016, 105–108.
 - 20 In his chapter enclosed in this volume, Joseph L. Underwood states that the Soviet Union lent sculptures from their collections. I am unable to verify either statement.
 - 21 Unfortunately, the National Archives of Senegal do not contain an answer to this request.
 - 22 The journal is kept in the National Archives of Senegal.
 - 23 For the coverage of the festival in African American journals cf. Tsatsi 2016.
 - 24 The fact that the Latvian Matvejs was himself a representative of a nation subjugated by first czarist, then Soviet imperial forces remains unacknowledged.

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9 Ousmane Sembène's *Borom Sarret* and the Circulation of "Tractor Art": A Cold War Contestation of Soviet Machine Iconography

*Tolliver Julie-Françoise*¹

The political engagement of Senegalese novelist and filmmaker Ousmane Sembène (1923–2007) is not a secret. His first film, the short *Borom Sarret* (1963), offers an incisive critique of the (post)colonial² state's perpetuation of the class structures of the colonial order, indicting both tradition and modern administrative rule in a clear-eyed exposition of the causes and effects of poverty. This chapter will attempt to place Sembène's oeuvre in a Cold War context. Indeed, Sembène's entire career hangs in the balance of the Cold War: at the time when he had applied to study cinema in the USSR, the "communist" pole of the conflict, Sembène had also requested a scholarship to study in Canada, the closest neighbor of the Cold War's "capitalist" pole. Discounting the ideological pull of these two poles, Sembène said in a 1993 interview with Ousseynou Diop, "It is not because you've studied in a country that you adopt its ideology. Those who studied in Canada and in the United States did not become capitalists for all that—and neither did they become the best in the profession, incidentally! Training and creation are very different" (Diop 1993, 28).³ His insistence on the distinction between education and creation, reminiscent of Western arguments about the separation of politics from art, contradicts the long political engagement that his literary and cinematic career constitutes.

Indeed, in spite of the claim he made in his interview with Diop, there is no denying that Sembène's formation in the USSR *did* shape his creative work, as this analysis of *Borom Sarret* will show. The influence is neither a simple imitation nor a direct application of Soviet discourses and models, however. By analyzing *Borom Sarret* (meaning "horse-cart driver," derived from the French *bonhomme-charrette*) and comparing it to Soviet predecessors that similarly portray "popular" vehicles—tractors—we can see that Sembène understands the stakes and potentials of the Soviet ideological pole and yet demonstrates their unsuitability for postcolonial

Senegal. His short film shows that the Soviet veneration of machinery and of the work of mechanics does not find its place in Dakar because of the different social structures found there and because of the nation's history of colonialism. Sembène's film, like other global south cultural products, indicates the need for a third way or for alternative alliances beyond those proffered by the USSR and the U.S. This search for a third way dominated a certain leftist, non-aligned framework in the global south. As Frantz Fanon famously wrote, "a Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched when it comes to addressing the colonial issue" (Fanon 1961, 5); Aimé Césaire, with analogous concerns, resigned from the French Communist Party in 1956, citing the metropolitan party's absolute failure to address the situation of France's colonies; Amílcar Cabral, similarly, theorized the aims of the Conferência das Organizações Nacionalistas das Colónias Portuguesas in terms of "a policy of non-alignment... we do not commit ourselves to blocks, we are not aligned with the decisions of others. We reserve the right to decide for ourselves and if by chance our options and our decisions coincide with those of others, that is not our fault" (Cabral 1979, 254).⁴ Sembène himself theorized this third way as a form of synthesis: "In Africa, between 1960 and 1970, we were constantly shuttling between capitalism and communism, and these two systems failed for us. Certain young people went to study in schools all over the world, and they came back with contradictions; we're looking for a synthesis. It's the only possible way, even if it's narrow" (Diop 1993, 30). This chapter will analyze how Sembène's *Borom Sarret* performs this synthesis as a critique of both Soviet communism and (post)colonial capitalism.

The self-narration of Sembène's turn toward filmmaking, which would eventually supersede his written production, is emblematic of this third way. His turn to cinema, Sembène explains, happened through the symbolic person of Patrice Lumumba, whose sacrificial political career at the heart of the Cold War's hottest front represents the unsuccessful search for alternatives to the competing global world orders. Sembène explains in a 1985 interview, "Lumumba was the first to bring my attention to the cultural emptiness of colonial Congo, and that really struck me. [...] I was given a ticket and I found myself in Leopoldville to prepare a report. [...] I became conscious that beyond literature there was only cinema, at least for us. I returned to Paris with the desire to learn to make cinema!" (Haffner 1985, 22). Sembène's trajectory, from the docks of Marseille to Dakar with stops in Kinshasa and Moscow, outlines the ideological search that made *Borom Sarret* a Cold War "site of contest."

In francophone studies, Sembène's turn to film is usually framed in the context of educating a wide public in (post)colonial Senegal.⁵ Sembène himself, for example, explained in a 1973 interview with Siradiou Diallo, "I thought it would be wise to turn to cinema. I am sure to reach the

mass with this form of expression. For me, cinema is the best evening school" (Diallo 2008, 54). Here, Sembène refers to the diglossic state of his country, where the majority neither read nor spoke French, the language of governmental institutions. Of course, the language struggle (as it is sometimes called) was very important to Sembène. His creation of the Wolof-language journal *Kaddu* shows the depth of his involvement with the struggle, which saw him take a firm position against the much more Francophile president Léopold Sedar Senghor: "It is really sad for us to listen to our leaders address the peasants as they would address academics or, even, French peasants" (Diallo 2008, 55).⁶ In addition, however, the mechanics and ideology of Sembène's turn to cinema participate in a wider struggle than Senegal's language struggle; they inscribe Senegal's language struggle in the Cold War, rooting the French-versus-national-languages problem of writing-versus-film in the opportunities represented by Cold War imperial attempts at influence and encroachment. To a Soviet interviewer, Sembène explained: "For me the art of the screen has first and foremost a political significance; cinema has many more adherents than any church or political party" (Chertok 1969, 31). Cinema emerges as a crucial means for reaching broad swathes of the decolonizing south. Indeed, the USSR and the US vied for influence over cultural production and thus political imagination in the freeing and newly liberated (post)colonies—this was the battle famously fought over "hearts and minds."⁷ At the Third International Congress of Cinematography in Tashkent (1974), part of a series of congresses about cinema that were "quite simply the venue where one could see the largest number and widest variety of films representing the world beyond Europe and North America" (Djagalov and Salazkina 2016, 280), Secretary General Leonid Brezhnev himself declaimed,

The wide popularity of cinema, its impact on the *minds and hearts* of millions of people make of cinema an influential force of public development. [...] In these modern circumstances, when the principles of peaceful coexistence depend more and more deeply on the practice of international relations, cinema especially can accomplish a lot toward the growth of mutual understanding and of cooperation of peoples, for the affirmation of ideas of peace, humanism, and social progress.

(Nesterov 1975, 129; emphasis added)

Within the global context envisioned by Brezhnev and realized by the USSR through scholarships and congresses, Sembène's turn to cinema, and therefore his reach into and influence on rural Senegalese culture, was facilitated by an outside power with its own clear agenda—the USSR.

Sembène was no simple Soviet dupe, however. Politically savvy, he was a former member of the Parti Communiste Français (PCF) and the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), educated in the PCF's night

schools but maintaining an autonomous position with regard to the PCF. He quit the party in 1960 when he left France for independent Senegal. Sembène's first film shows the complexity of his engagement with his Soviet cinematic education; the short is clearly influenced by Soviet film, and yet it critiques Soviet cinema as much as it renders it homage. *Borom Sarret* can be considered a Soviet-style "ode to the machine" being assessed for transposition to a (post)colonial setting.

Although it is widely known that Sembène trained in Moscow at the Gorki Studios in 1961, Soviet influence on Sembène's work remains relatively unexplored.⁸ The present chapter takes up the challenge, offering a focused analysis of *Borom Sarret* in relation to Aleksandr Dovzhenko's 1930 *Zemlia (Earth)* and Ivan Pyriev's 1939 *Traktoristi (Tractor Drivers)*. I compare the films' construction of the machine as agent for social change in order to identify the Cold War significance of Sembène's cultural production. The comparison highlights elements of Sembène's short film that have been previously neglected, locating both the Wolof traditions and the vestigial coloniality—or the (post) coloniality—that structure the cart driver's life in an international socialist context. In addition, studying Soviet influences on *Borom Sarret* calls for the serious consideration of "tractor art"—socialist art that exalts the work of machines, sometimes denigratingly labeled "girl meets tractor"—as a broad genre whose forms, far from merely revering industrial advances, offer complex critiques of nationalism and international imperialism. In eras of rapid social and industrial development (post-October USSR and post-independence Senegal), tractors and carts, machines that share the characteristic of both performing work and moving forward, constitute symbolic sites that represent emerging modernities⁹ and their new social orders.

Dovzhenko's Montages of Tractor-Driven Progress

The ideology of Cold War-era Soviet institutions like the 1960s Gorki studio where Ousmane Sembène studied was shaped by iconography from previous decades. This section examines the iconography of the tractor (and of machines more broadly) in Aleksandr Dovzhenko's *Earth*, an exemplary silent film from the early 1930s, a decade during which the USSR turned toward the Stalinist state centralization that defined its later history. Sembène knew the films of Dovzhenko,¹⁰ and *Earth*, considered a masterpiece, was certainly included in his Soviet education. The silent film *Earth*, first shown in 1930, was produced at a time when the Soviet state was increasingly cracking down on cultural producers and trying to enforce a uniform Soviet imaginary and style.¹¹ Although *Earth* has become the film for which Dovzhenko is most remembered,¹² the criticism it received when it was first released reflects the complexities of the moment, which saw the crushing of the 1920s

film industry in an attempt to enforce Soviet values in cultural production. As Peter Kenez documents, critics found Dovzhenko's film too symbolic for the masses: "the film was ideologically harmful and its style made it incomprehensible for worker and peasant audiences" (Kenez 1988, 427). Other critics complained that the film "did not mobilize the masses for struggle against the kulaks" (1988, 426). Yet others complained that Dovzhenko was interested in "biological rather than social processes" (1988, 427). This last criticism is most valid; the film works with nature imagery (fallen apples, wind blowing through grasses) to integrate social events into the cycle of the seasons. Kenez calls *Earth* "a celebration of nature and the peasant way of life" (1988, 426). And yet the tractor, I argue, definitely emerges in the film as the symbol for technological advance, the modernization of agriculture and of vast stretches of rural country, uniting with nature to quilt a wholesome background against which social events take place.

The premise of *Earth* is that as an older generation of ox-driving farmers on a collective farm in what is now Ukraine die out (the film opens with the death of elderly Semyon), a younger generation of Bolsheviks ("the Party cell") transforms collective farming with the use of mechanization—specifically, a brand-new tractor. This mechanization brings them into direct conflict with the *kulaks*, the rich farmers who own the land around the collective farm—as the young hero Vasili (played by Semion Svashenko) exclaims, "WE'LL... PROSPER... WITH MACHINES!"¹³ transcribed in all caps, one word per shot. "We'll get machines [he continues] and take the earth away from [the *kulaks*]." During the same speech, he threatens, "The rich farmers' fields have lost their fences," which earns him a threat in return from a young kulak, who does eventually assassinate Vasili after the tractor plows through his fence. Like Eisenstein, Dovzhenko deals not with individuals and their psychology but rather with "types" (Kenez 1988, 423), in this case two opposing stereotypes: the young revolutionary collectivist opposed to the egotistical rich farmer. Similarly, the machine—the tractor—becomes a symbol for progress, a figure for the revolution's transformation of society and the land.

The Soviet collectivists' relation with the tractor is both intimate and impersonal, and the machine itself is both alive and not. A member of the party cell labels it "a Bolshevik steel horse," highlighting its dual animate/inanimate nature. Indeed, it mixes strangely with humans and human power. When the hero and his team first drive the tractor to the farm, they are stalled by the radiator running dry; the men decide to urinate into the radiator, one at a time, fueling the tractor with their bodily fluids—or, as Vance Kepley writes, "blending the organic and mechanical realms" (Kepley 1986, 82). The act of public micturition (otherwise taboo) is suggested by shots that hide, with comical decency, the micturating element, mystifying the human-machine connection and

privileging the peasants' perspective rather than the audience's in this process of naturalization of the mechanical.

Our first full glimpse of the tractor comes only when it finally arrives at the farm. We see it from an entirely different (and purely cinematic) perspective from the collective farmers. It is filmed from above, on a diagonal, alone and in a puff of smoke, a mystical object dropped from the sky, its burnished newness emerging like a saintly apparition of the modern age (Figure 9.1).

Dovzhenko represents the mechanization of labor with a montage, a technique he is famous for developing. In the "harvest sequence, ... the peasants develop an ecstatic rhythm as they work in synchronization with the machines" (Kepley 1986, 83). Increasingly, however, machines replace humans. The magic of montage comes to symbolize the magic of the machines that are mass-producing food and transforming life on the collective farm. Tellingly, the musical score accompanying this montage includes phrases from the nineteenth-century Russian folk song *Kalinka*, a reference that nationalizes the gloriously rapid production of bread. With this montage, the film elevates agricultural machines as the Soviet state's new secular deities, representing the nation's drive for social and industrial evolution. The tractor (and its various appendages and companion machines) becomes a clear metaphor for the USSR's own startlingly rapid progress. It is no wonder, considering the veneration of



Figure 9.1 *Zemlia* (1930), *the apparition of the tractor* (screenshot, *Zemlia*).

Soviet progress evinced in this sequence, that Dovzhenko was astounded that critics considered *Earth* reactionary.¹⁴

The Militaristic Tractor in Pyriev's Stalinist Musical Comedy

Avant-garde imaginaries of Soviet life like Dovzhenko's *Earth* present a nuanced (and thus problematic, in the eyes of Soviet critics) apotheosis of the state. Cold War-era ideology was also shaped by the massively popular musical comedies of the 1930s and 40s, a period that saw the consolidation of Stalin's power and the ratification of his vision of centralized state communism. Ivan Pyriev's 1939 Stalinist musical comedy *Tractor Drivers*, in spite of belonging to a genre entirely different from Dovzhenko's serious film, similarly elevates the tractor to a Soviet object of cinematic veneration. The film is essentially a love story; it celebrates the romantic alliance of Mariana Bazhan, the heroic leader of a collective farm tractor brigade (played by Marina Ladygina, at the time Pyriev's wife) with Klim Yarko¹⁵ (played by Soviet heart-throb Nikolai Kriuchkov), a young tank driver returning from military service who is also a fabulous mechanic. *Tractor Drivers* features healthy competition for production between gender-based tractor-driver collectives, a benevolent and fatherly local chairman, and plenty of singing. The Stalinist musical comedy, a wildly popular genre that arose at the same time as Socialist Realism, "necessitated generalization and typification," tropes facilitated by the musical's "dichotomy between 'real' and utopian frames" (Anderson 1995, 41). The genre's reliance on stereotype helps establish the tractor not as an incidental, circumstantial advantage but rather as a symbol of national progress.

Tractor Drivers underscores the importance of the machine, of its maintenance, and its caretakers/drivers; the tractor features as the main instrument of collectivized agricultural production, which the film represents as feeding an immense nation. The musical comedy genre is much more light-handed in its treatment of tractor iconography than Dovzhenko's serious film, and yet the underlying message is similar. The following image shows a young woman happily and rapidly plowing the collective farm field atop her "Stalinets" tractor, a type of tractor also used by the military to drag heavy artillery—which explains Klim's familiarity with the machine (Figure 9.2).

The image, with the obliquely oriented tractor and its smiling blonde driver, suggests a cavalier relationship between human and machine; the tractor itself resembles a human head, with headlights for eyes (the driver does not need to look ahead) and the parasol for a hat. The exposed motor, with its intricate workings, becomes the machine's brain, and the young woman merely an instrument of its functioning. The ideological force of the image comes from the ease of the labor; the machine and woman represent the speed of modernity.



Figure 9.2 *Traktoristi* (1939), “Stalinets” tractor as head (screenshot, *Traktoristi*).

Not all tractor passages in the film are so light-hearted, however. The “March of the Tank Drivers” features prominently, establishing a parallel between tractor and military tank. Indeed, the parallel is explicit; as young men work at dawn, the steam of the plowed fields in the cold air resembles the smoke of a battleground, and the driver of the tractor sings, “The machines will begin their fierce campaign / When Comrade Stalin calls us into battle!” The overlapping signification of the word *mashina*, which can mean both tank and tractor, merges agricultural advance with military conquest. Composed for the film, the “March of the Tank Drivers” went on to broad usage in Soviet propaganda during World War II. *Tractor Drivers*, in its brazen militarism, thus anticipates the onset of the war, in spite of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of non-aggression, signed the same year as the film was released. Culturally, the film suggests, the USSR was preparing for war, even as it was remaining politically neutral. The tractor, as metaphor for the drive toward national progress, thus also encompasses martial might.

The musical comedy concludes with Mariana and Klim’s wedding, which takes place “Right at the first snow ... Immediately after the sowing.” The romantic premise of the film thus folds into the seasonal work cycle of the collective farm, with Stalin’s photo presiding over the

wedding (the camera pans up to reveal it near the ceiling) as his name on the tractor's nose presides over agricultural labor. The machine in *Tractor Drivers*, and in cultural revolution-era Soviet cultural production as well, materializes as an unmitigated ideological marker for progress, Stalinist leadership, social and industrial advances, and Soviet might. The nation is imagined moving forward as the tractor moves forward, transforming reality as it goes; it also constitutes the perfect instrument through which could be imagined the happy marriage of individual labor, collective labor, and state dictatorship. The figure of the tractor driver blends metaphorically the individual worker with the leader of the state, providing an allegory for centralized power under a single all-powerful leader, and the collective nature of the tractor's work on the farm masks this power at the same time as it validates it.

Dovzhenko's and Pyriev's "odes to the machine" contributed to the definition of Cold War-era Soviet ideology; from this period of heavy-handed iconography emerged a national consciousness branded with the concept of the machine representing the communist state as an always-already progressive entity, relentlessly motoring forward into a bright future.

Contesting the Tractor's Reach: Sembène's Horse-Drawn Cart

Ousmane Sembène's 22-minute short *Borom Sarret* is a site of contest for the Soviet trope of mechanical mobility as a metaphor for national progress. Sembène's choice to focus on a transport worker and his vehicle suggests the influence of his Soviet sources, like *Earth* and *Tractor Drivers*, but his radical departure from the elegiac grandiosity of the earlier works shows his awareness of the limits of Soviet-style communism on (post)colonial ground. *Borom Sarret* features a horse-drawn cart as a metaphor for the nation, contesting the universal applicability of the Soviet myth of progress through mechanization and indicting both capitalist and communist models of development for their failure to accommodate the realities of (post)coloniality.

Borom Sarret was produced in 1963, a year after Sembène's return to Senegal from Moscow. The film opens with the morning call to prayer; the cart driver prays on a mat in his house's yard with his *gris-gris* (good-luck charms) laid out before him next to his Western-style fedora hat, outlining the vestigial iconographies of Sufism, animism, and colonialism that define the man's life. The two actors credited at the beginning of the film—the driver (played by Abdoulaye Ly) and his horse (played by Albourah)—then leave the courtyard to join the third part of their *équipage*, the cart, which we first see through the opening in the fence (Figure 9.3).

Incomplete, cut off by the ramshackle gate, the cart stands in the center of the shot, immobile and useless with its shafts pointing up at a



Figure 9.3 Borom Sarret (1963), *presenting the horse-drawn cart* (screenshot, Borom Sarret).

45 degree angle, looking small compared to the corrugated iron fence, the low building in the background, and the tall palms. Even in the mid-distance, we can see that its materials are disparate: unevenly colored wooden planks combine with an axle and tires from an automobile. We see later that the cart's seat sags when Borom Sarret and his passengers sit on it, and we hear the squeak of one of the wheels.

The cart, with its horse, its automobile tires, its wooden body, is an amalgamation of found materials; there is no clear “break with the past” as the Soviet tractor represents because the cart is constructed from the *bric-à-brac* of the present and the past, its mechanisms both traditional and modern. Sembène, however, is trying to undo precisely these hierarchies and dichotomies; there can be no “modern” when the cart is constructed of refuse, or rather, *this* is what modernity constitutes in the context of (post)colonial Senegal. Borom Sarret has cobbled together a functional machine that performs, not industrialized agriculture or massive organized work, but the marginal, “unproductive” work of the interstices of capital. Indeed, images of international consumerist capitalism invade Sembène's screen (Figure 9.4).

Here, hovering above the Sandaga market building, are advertisements for Vérigoud, an Algerian-French soft drink that disappeared from



Figure 9.4 Borom Sarret (1963), Sandaga market building (screenshot, *Borom Sarret*).

markets not long after Algerian independence, and for Singer, the American sewing machine company that made a fortune selling its treadle machines in the developing world beyond the electric grid.¹⁶ This is not the hermetic self-contained world of the Soviet collective farm imagined in Dovzhenko's and Pyriev's films; this is a city imbricated in Western capitalist channels that impose consumerist habits even as they funnel resources away from the global south.

Similarly, the horse-drawn cart is unlike the Soviet tractor, which symbolizes the labor of state capitalism and which denotes planning on a national scale. Dovzhenko's and Pyriev's tractors imply that the farms are functioning at capacity, that they are part of a perfectly efficient system. There is no margin, no room for anyone to fill the cracks: the system is imagined as coherent and tight—although, of course, the reality of the Soviet countryside during the late 1920s and early 30s included violence and widespread famine. Sembène's horse-drawn cart, his choice of equivalent symbolic labor vehicle, contests the applicability of the idealized Soviet narrative of mechanization as social perfection; Borom Sarret exists on the outside of mechanization, recuperating its scraps when he can.

Within this system of creative recuperation, the actual work that the machine of *Borom Sarret* does is the work of the poor. The cart driver's

first passengers are his neighbors from the “indigenous quarter.” The first is a teenage boy who hops on without receiving a word of comment from the Borom Sarret’s voiceover thoughts. Next, the driver stops for a woman going to the market to sell her wares—“Poor woman, I wonder when she’ll ever be able to pay me,” muses the driver to himself. And finally, an unemployed man gets on board, “That leech Mamadou.” None of these passengers can pay Borom Sarret; as he says, “a handshake and that’s all.” The handshake as a form of payment suggests a social economy of mutual aid, but as the cart driver knows, his passengers are in no position to contribute reciprocally beyond the handshake; the exchange is unequal. The cart driver’s overarching concern—the need to make money to feed his wife, his child, and his horse—is completely foreign to the collective farms represented in Dovzhenko’s and Pyriev’s films. In the idealized Soviet setting, a tractor appears magically, against no monetary exchange, and the machines then produce food in plenty for all to eat. For the poor of Sembène’s Dakar, by contrast, nothing is free, and money is difficult to come by.

Borom Sarret makes it clear that the cart symbolizes the life of the poor by tying it to the life-cycle of the *quartier indigène*. The cart driver, playing the part of a drastically underpaid and extremely slow ambulance driver, drives a bulgingly pregnant woman to the Maternité. At another point, the cart is an underpaid hearse, helping a man by carrying his dead infant to the city’s cemetery. The horse-drawn cart sees birth and death, the entire life-cycle of the *quartier indigène*, and thus becomes a symbol for the existence of Dakar’s poorest—but unlike in Dovzhenko’s pastoral elegy, the human life-cycle does not blossom metaphorically or produce symbolic fruit; the pregnant body hobbles into a cold, sun-bleached colonial hospital, and the tiny dead body is laid on the dusty road, wrapped in its immaculate white sheet. The symbolic connection to nature is lost. And unlike the Soviet tractor, whose work is represented as a perpetual forward motion, Sembène’s cart moves in circles, limited to and always returning to the *quartier indigène*.

The opulently dressed griot, who proves to be part of the downfall of the cart driver by worming out of him all the money he has earned, performs the only ode we see in *Borom Sarret*, but not an ode to the machine. The griot sings an ode to the man, which stirs the vanity of the driver. As Manthia Diawara makes clear, “The griot turns tradition into a tool of exploitation when he evokes the cart driver’s past nobility in order to take away all the money he has earned for the morning labor. The griot’s narrative about the cart driver, which would have been authoritative in oral tradition, is debunked here as exploitative and not inclusive of the contemporary realities that oppress the cart driver” (Diawara 1988, 9). A glorification of the individual man, his lineage, his family’s past accomplishments: these are the attractive illusions that distract Borom Sarret from his reality. But the film indicates, by naming

the man only “Borom Sarret,” for instance, that in the 1960s Dakar context, the driver is nothing beyond his association with his cart. Mechanization (insofar as the horse-drawn cart cannot quite be considered “mechanization”) detaches humans from the elements that tradition had earlier contributed to their identity.¹⁷ In contrast to Sembène’s 1930s Soviet influences, however, the machine as a new form of guarantor of identity provides no assurance of material progress for the individual, his community, or the state.

Borom Sarret suggests something quite different. The horse-drawn cart is a vehicle that represents specifically the cracks in the system; it fulfills the needs that do not get met by top-down planning—the type of central planning represented by the figures of the party cell in *Earth* or the local chairman in *Tractor Drivers*. Senghor’s African socialism differs drastically from Soviet socialism, even as it opposes itself to first-world capitalism. Neither the West nor the East, Senghor’s film suggests, offered room for the inapplicability of their systems to the situation of the South. *Borom Sarret*’s critique represents an attack on ideologies that imagine themselves as universally applicable: the film shows a system that works comprehensively but only for the rich, leaving the destitute trying to circulate and birth and live and die around the edges of this system, and it suggests that this system is not truly a “system” since it cannot encompass the entire population or address the needs of all. If capitalism, as represented by the ads for Singer and Vérigoud as well as by the chic young man who finally causes the cart driver’s downfall by asking him to help him move his belongings from the *quartier indigène* to the Plateau (the former colonial neighborhood now home to Senegal’s new black middle and upper classes), cannot bring the poor of Dakar out of their poverty, neither does the idealized mythology of Soviet communism, with its faith in mechanization and universal industrial progress, apply seamlessly to Senegal’s (post)colonial setting.

The short film *Borom Sarret* can be considered a problematization of the idealized Soviet machine in a (post)colonial setting, with emphasis on all the problems this setting entails. The fact that the “machine” (the horse-drawn cart) cannot circulate everywhere in Dakar—it is forbidden from going to the Plateau—is a sign of the continuing imperial structures that set firm limits on the “machine” here. Such limitations show to what extent Soviet tractor art is an ode to (idealized) Soviet social functioning as much as it is to the tractor itself. *Borom Sarret*’s limitations also show the lie to capitalism’s democratic pretensions: the race- and class-based restrictions of (post)colonial Dakar prevent the unfettered flow of capital that might allow the cart driver to make a living. *Borom Sarret*’s Dakar is an imperialist capitalist city where the police stand as a threat of militaristic force not in defense of the people (as the Soviet tanks were eulogized as being in *Tractor Drivers*) but in defense of foreign capital, whose signage dominates the skyline. Indeed, as the cart driver returns

home, cartless—the police confiscate his vehicle—he walks slowly by the Place de l’Obélisque, where a tall white obelisk commemorates the date of Senegal’s independence from France. The obelisk’s immobility within the shot compared with the cars and buses that pass it suggests the shot’s irony: can the country be considered independent, the film seems to ask, if a citizen cannot circulate freely within it? Sembène’s critique of Soviet universality is buttressed by a critique of neo-colonialism, or of the imperial-capitalist structures that continue to govern Dakar.

Without his cart, Borom Sarret is unmoored from the only identity provided him in the film—the identity of worker-driver. And as he reaches home, he is further dislocated from his identity: his wife hands him the baby and leaves the yard, saying, “Hold the baby, I promise you we’ll eat tonight.” Emasculated, the cart driver wonders, “Where is she going at this hour?,” suggesting, as Paulin Vieyra surmised in an early review, that she is going to sell herself in exchange for money for the evening meal (Vieyra 1968, 62). Sex work is, in a way, the epitome of work relying on the human body, standing in stark opposition to the idealized mechanization of labor represented by apotheosizing shots of tractors in *Earth* and *Tractor Drivers*. Senegal, *Borom Sarret* indicates, cannot follow the Soviet model of mechanization because its machines, such as they are, are confiscated by a (post)colonial system that maintains capital in the old network of imperial hands. “Tractor art,” transposed as “horse-cart art,” becomes a critical mode of engagement with Senegal’s rhetoric of Francophile nationalism, with continued imperial encroachment, and with Soviet models of liberation. *Borom Sarret* takes stock of Senegal’s Cold War options and finds them all lacking. But it also offers the fragile horse-cart itself as a potential model for transformation. Sembène’s dark tale suggests that his 1963 nation, and other (post)colonies, should strive to forge their own un-exploitative, a-capitalist, and un-imperial future, not by borrowing imagery, methods, or ideology from the USSR, but by creatively recuperating and cobbling together what is useful or serviceable from all the options available. The cart, then, in its state of perpetual *bricolage*, stands as a symbol for the (post)colonial state, confiscated from its people but waiting to be liberated and put to transformative use.

Notes

- 1 The author would like to thank her Russian professors, whose influence on her work has been significant in spite of her turn toward francophone studies: Franklin Sciacca, John Bartle, and Shoshana Keller at Hamilton College, and Julia Verkholtantsev, Kevin Platt, and Peter Steiner at the University of Pennsylvania.
- 2 Throughout this chapter, I use the parenthesized term (post)colonial, expanding from the field of linguistics developed by Laurent Dubreuil (see Dubreuil 2013, 4). The neocolonial structures against which Sembène reacts in many of his works are evidence that colonialism survives the “colonial period” itself in more than the linguistic context.

- 3 Throughout, translations from French and Russian are my own.
- 4 For more detailed examinations of the cultivation of alternative alliances during the Cold War, see the special issue of the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, which the author co-edited with Monica Popescu and Cedric Tolliver.
- 5 Gesine Drews-Sylla's examines Senghor's view of literature as a "weapon for social impact" in her chapter in this volume. She also comments extensively on Soviet representations of Sembène as an "educator" of the Senegalese masses.
- 6 For an explanation of Senghor's role in Senegal's politics relative to the Cold War, see Drews-Sylla's chapter. For an investigation of the politics of the Wolofization campaign in which Sembène participated, see O'Brien.
- 7 For information on the American side of the cultural Cold War, see Cedric R. Tolliver's *Of Vagabonds and Fellow Travelers* and Frances Stonor Saunders' *The Cultural Cold War*.
- 8 Josephine Woll's groundbreaking article, "The Russian Connection: Soviet Cinema and the Cinema of Francophone Africa," represents the main exception to this rule.
- 9 On the concept of multiple modernities, or the contestation of a single, universal, Eurocentric modernity, see, for example, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt's edited volume, *Multiple Modernities*.
- 10 Woll quotes an interview Sembène gave to Isskustvo Kino in 1970 during which he acknowledges having studied the films of Eisenstein and Dovzhenko (Woll 2004, 228).
- 11 For more information on increased state oversight of cinema, see Denise J. Youngblood, "The Fate of Soviet Popular Cinema during the Stalin Revolution," and Vance Kepley, Jr., "The First Perestroika: Soviet Cinema under the First Five-Year Plan."
- 12 See Kepley (1986, 75).
- 13 Vasilii uses the word mashiny, which means motorized vehicle, car, or more broadly machine; the subtitled, however, chooses to translate mashina with the word "tractor," and the tractor is indeed the first and most prominent machine to arrive on the collective farm. The film was conceived during a period of voluntary collectivization, but it came out at a time when Stalin was orchestrating the violent "dekulakization" of the USSR (Kepley 1986, 84), which aimed to "eliminate the kulaks as a class" (Kepley 1986, 77). The confrontation between kulaks and the state reached war-like proportions, with deaths caused by famines, killings, and labor camps estimated in the millions (1986, 78). Against this backdrop of violence, the hero's assassination at the end of *Earth* becomes more than the death of an individual—it represents a kind of national genocide occurring in the provinces. And yet, as Kepley argues, the film is also a pastoral, its premise one of harmony "between man and nature, nature and technology, life and death" (Kepley 1986, 84).
- 14 See Kenez (1988, 427).
- 15 Not incidentally, the name "Yarko" means clear, light. The character Klim Yarko does bring metaphorical light to the village.
- 16 For a short history of the Vérigoud soda (the name is a French approximation of "very good"), see the website <http://lamalleapapa.com/marque/verigoud>. Steven Haggblade, Thomas Reardon, and Eric Hyman examine the global dominance of the Singer sewing machine in rural nonfarm settings (Haggblade et al. 2007, 326).
- 17 Sembène is not necessarily mourning the growing irrelevance of the griot's authority. As Diawara argues, Sembène "transcends the griot... [surrounding] him and his old narrative with a new vision which traces the mechanism by which people such as the cart driver are exploited" (Diawara 1988, 9).

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10 Networks of South-South Solidarity and Cold War Argentine Filmmaking

*Jessica Stites Mor*¹

Documentary and political filmmaking has been lauded by historians as the revisionist's playground, the repository of personal testimonies about the past, and the scene of collective memory struggles and shared fantasies of the past. For the military dictatorships that came to power with U.S. support during the Cold War in Latin America, particularly those in Chile, Brazil, and Argentina, the suppression of outspoken cultural critics was seen as an important feature of maintaining the illusion of public support. In Argentina, politicized filmmakers were frequently victims of state violence, and military regimes, of which there were several in the 1960s to the early 1980s, targeted prominent directors, writers, and actors, forcing many into hiding in order to suppress their critical viewpoints. However, as Argentine filmmakers sought refuge in exile in cities like Havana, Paris, Prague, and Mexico, they were welcomed into political and creative communities invested in internationalism, non-alignment, and other forms of transnational resistance to the dictates of the Cold War. The adaptability of film to the service of such campaigns was not lost on Argentine exiles, and within these sites of contest, many renewed their filmmaking activity in order to create a means by which they could raise awareness about human rights abuses and dictatorship at home. Argentine directors found themselves at the forefront of the articulation of a new form of activist filmmaking, Third World Cinema, which provided a model for crafting solidarity networks through rebellious film spaces and the use of film as a vehicle for presenting counternarratives to the Argentine state. As the Cold War continued, these transnational solidarity networks, organized on behalf of Argentine causes, brought pressure on the dictatorship to end censorship and restore democratic institutions, revealing transnational solidarity film networks to be a powerful political resource and force of change.

Political and documentary films became a vital means to understanding Argentina's state repression abroad. And once democracy was restored, these same films were essential tools of rebuilding the left in the aftermath of repression. However, this model of solidarity had its limits. To fully understand the way in which this mode of transnational solidarity operated

and how it eventually failed, it is helpful to focus on two critical moments, that of the return of exiled directors in the aftermath of the dictatorship and the period between the late 1990s and early 2000s when filmmakers reshaped the landscape of film production to bring new critiques of the state to international audiences. This chapter argues that transnational filmmaking networks during the Cold War became important sites for cultural politics and activism that served as the foundation from which post-Cold War filmmaking would later assert a renewed solidarity agenda. It also argues that the success of this model of solidarity inadvertently allowed political filmmaking to be organized in ways that eventually would compromise the original and more radical goals of South-South solidarity to which the movement initially aspired.

Background

As early as 1945, Argentine filmmakers took to the streets to protest imperialism in front of the U.S. Embassy. By the 1950s, professional associations of writers and a newly formed union, the Sindicato de la Industria Cinematográfica Argentina (SICA), had organized to advocate for workers' rights and to prevent censorship and blacklisting of filmmakers, technicians, directors, and actors (SICA 1998, 3–5).² Argentine filmmaking, tied to larger trends in technological advancement and the changing interests and tastes of its consumers, was always interconnected in some way with international politics or at very least with the international dimensions of its production.³ However, a distinctly political national cinema emerged in response to class issues, rapid industrialization in urban centers, and state repression as it was used to discipline the masses and restrict dissent (Karush 2012). This tradition of politicized cinema became a more vital force at home as film workers actively advanced causes through various ties to political parties and figures. Beginning in the mid-1960s, several groups of filmmakers took a more radical turn, and by the 1970s, notable directors like Raymundo Gleyzer, Fernando “Pino” Solanas, Octavio Getino, Fernando Birri, and others found themselves in frequent conflict with the state, producing films that challenged various leaders and eventually facing death threats and persecution (Lusnich 2009; Martín Peña and Vallina 2000).

Several filmmakers affiliated with political parties such as the Communist Party, with unions, or with militant or radical groups were targeted first. Some had been persecuted for exposing state violence against organizing workers through underground newsreel films, others for advancing ideas of national liberation or exposing the corruption of officials. The regime that came to power in 1976 was seen by the U.S. as targeting militancy, seeing Argentina's left as a counterpart to what they considered violent terrorist organizations like the Black Panthers, although at the time of the coup there had been very little militant activity

following the previous administration's attempts to curtail these groups and their activities. With U.S. support and cooperation, Argentina successfully dismantled what was left of the radical left and most of the traditional left as well, leveling unions and attacking leaders of parties that represented the interests of the working class. The junta of generals that remained in power from 1976 to 1983 solidified the practice of disappearance, creating clandestine detention centers across the country, and silencing the press and opposition parties. Some filmmakers, including Raymundo Gleyzer, were disappeared and murdered in captivity, but other prominent directors who had been fortunate enough to escape continued to keep in contact with their families and political counterparts from exile. In exile, Argentine filmmakers, often having found refuge within communities of other peoples displaced by the Cold War in Latin America and sometimes elsewhere, began to demonstrate and speak out against human rights violations in Argentina, hoping to elicit international support against the dictatorship (Campo 2013, 158).

Fernando Solanas, for instance, spent most of his exile in Spain and France, while Fernando Birri and Octavio Getino spent time in Latin America, with significant stays in Cuba and Peru, respectively. It was in exile that the construction of solidarity networks among these filmmakers began.⁴ At first, these networks served primarily to disseminate information about disappearances, torture, and other rights violations in Argentina. Sometimes their activities would also result in petitions signed by organizations abroad, such as in Mexico City and Paris, where many student organizations and leftist political parties passed resolutions condemning the Argentine state and asking for their own governments to act. While in Europe, Solanas, in particular, was able to communicate with exiled former president Juan Perón and to use his public platform in cities like Paris and Madrid as a director of films produced abroad to discuss the Argentine military's anti-Peronism and to advocate for the decriminalization of Peronist political organizations. However, in these spaces of exile, Argentina's political situation was not the only concern. Local publics that met to discuss the fate of Argentina were also actively engaged with other forms of resistance to Cold War contests of power. Some were engaged in critiques of U.S. imperialism in Latin America as akin to the struggles of national liberation and anti-colonialism in Africa and Asia. Others saw the fate of displaced peoples and exiles from Latin America as part of a broader struggle of stateless peoples, connecting displacement and questions of self-determination to the fate of Palestinian peoples in the newly created state of Israel, for instance. Critiques of the Vietnam War connected powerfully with those of U.S. military interventions in Central America and the Caribbean.

Filmmakers and other cultural producers who spent a period of time in exile in Havana were formally welcomed by Castro and often included in the activities of Cuba's film institute, the Instituto Cubano del Arte e

Industria Cinematográficos.⁵ A handful of journalists, artists, activists, and filmmakers from Argentina living in Havana also began to identify their own interests with that of the Third Worldist cinema movement which was beginning to emerge from the Tricontinentalist movement and from an interest in the cinema of Latin America and the Third World in Europe and North America. Argentine filmmakers began to utilize film as a means of actively participating in Third World solidarities and creating a transnational site of cultural resistance to the neo-imperialist ambitions of the U.S. and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Directors participated in meetings to discuss the aims of what could be a “Third Cinema” and gave lectures, published manifestos, and offered broad support to the efforts of using film as a site of resistance to imperialism in its many forms. After the dictatorship ended in 1983, however, filmmakers were able to consider the possibility of returning to Argentina. Many chose to do so, but this time returned with newfound international reputations and opportunities.

Argentine filmmakers returning from exile continued to network across borders to consolidate support against military dictatorship and human rights abuses. They were able to find ways to produce films that reckoned with this dark past in such a way that would engage international audiences. Luis Puenzo’s *La historia oficial* (1985) even won an Oscar for Best Foreign Film. Returning directors were keenly aware that film projects critical of the state might still eventually be caught up in renewed attempts at censorship and that their own safety might again be in jeopardy. Producing films that would be viewed on an international stage was one mechanism to provide a small measure of protection. In other words, participation in transnationalization of political cinema in Argentina opened spaces abroad for Argentine cultural production that was at risk or restricted by lack of sufficient resources at home. This changed the way producers of political film in Argentina considered reaching useful audiences. The appeal of transnational markets, co-production opportunities, and film circuits meant that many directors sought to work with producers abroad, such as Canal 4 and Telefe, while Argentine-based producers struggled to navigate the vagaries of a complicated transition period.⁶

By the mid-1980s, Manuel Antín, appointed to head the film institute, the Instituto Nacional de Cine y Artes Audiovisuales (INCAA) by the civil transition government of Raul Alfonsín, pushed for new legislation governing cinema and made explicit the re-democratizing state’s objective to reestablish and protect the ability of Argentine filmmakers to make political cinema. If the cross-border production alliances and solidarity networks that supported filmmakers in exile were useful in pushing the Argentine government to reinvest and recommit to protecting cinema at home, they did not necessarily favor support for the institutions of filmmaking that had been the mainstays of cinema

activism, such as the union. Both the SICA and the INCAA struggled in the 1980s to revitalize the national film industry, given the uncertainty of the transition itself and the tremendous pressure of international market contexts. But, at the same time, the international presence and established reputation of Latin American Cinema and Third Cinema directors also provided an additional form of safety and space for critique in moments of heightened insecurity. The ability to move beyond the national and between transnational spaces of production provided an increased freedom for directors and many developed effective strategies for utilizing transnational networks to foster reliable yet dynamic domestic conditions of transnational activist film production.

Beyond the set of institutions that created the mechanisms and space for large scale film production, creative communities and individual agents were able to shape films for the international community as a cultural object that could assert specific viewpoints and represent positions of solidarity within wider struggles. While many directors made a significant impact in negotiating their cultural production via unions, the state, industry, non-profit organizations, and other parties, in order to maximize their civil liberties and maintain the long-term stability of professional life within a rapidly changing global economy, directors working by the 1990s shifted their focus in what has been termed the New Argentine Cinema movement.⁷ Political filmmaking in Argentina in the 1960s tended to emphasize common understandings of shared suffering at the hands of greater evils, such as the neo-colonial impulses of competing superpowers during the Cold War, and mutual obligation to advance the people's struggle against common enemies across the Third World. They formulated a model upon which film could shape understandings of Cold War conflict and present alternative visions of both the past and possible futures. This model of solidarity was one that imagined South-South struggle against powerful forces of capital and empire. However, its success was not necessarily found in its ability to tie together these disparate regions. In contrast, the political filmmaking that emerged after the 1983 return of civilian power in Argentina and in the aftermath of the Cold War, the viral cinema of the early 1990s and 2000s, while founded upon the premise of this earlier model of solidarity, was far more tied to the opportunities presented by the transnational environment itself.

Constructing Political Realities

Transnational networks of solidarity dramatically changed the professional labors of being and becoming a political filmmaker in Latin America but also created new conceptual sites for film creation. In the first decade after the Cuban Revolution, high-profile documentary filmmakers, supported by governments, foundations, and news media

services, participated in a professional life very much akin to that of the travel-writer or correspondent journalist. Figures like Cuban director Santiago Álvarez, Brazilian director Glauber Rocha, and Argentine Raymundo Gleyzer followed in the footsteps of internationally-renowned documentary filmmakers like Joris Ivens, the Dutch filmmaker who had made for himself a reputation by making documentary films of critical political events in trouble spots around the globe such as the Spanish Civil War and later the anti-colonialist movement in Vietnam. Travel and reflection on political struggles of universal significance expressed a certain degree of cosmopolitanism and lent additional credibility to these filmmakers who would later be celebrated as having participated in the creation of a New Latin American Cinema movement, or *nuevo cine latinoamericano*. In general terms, the political filmmaker during this period followed a professional trajectory that began with professional journalism or film school training. It might also include travels supported by entrepreneurial efforts from within the media industry. These filmmakers often then produced work on subjects very much influenced by a trans-regional or transnational political perspective.

Facing the prospect of exile as the Cold War continued to heat up, many political filmmakers found themselves confronting their work in light of political affiliations, as well, aligning themselves with, for instance, radical militant factions within unions or branches of leftist revolutionary parties, where offering to work alongside organizers within such institutions allowed them to network within circles that did not only include artists and other filmmakers but also included leading figures within local movements, activists, and intellectuals. Outside of these circles abroad, they were able to function both as exponents and as beneficiaries of a variety of solidarity-based political actions, ranging from gathering financial support for projects and smuggling of politically dangerous works to seeking for themselves safe homes during periods of exile or protection against the Argentine military in the form of non-cooperation with requests for intelligence or extradition. During their absence from the national filmmaking scene, many adopted second homes, where they experienced inclusion in exile communities, but did not always find themselves capable of accessing the same resources as residents with citizenship. This forced displacement reinforced both increased intellectual and cultural circulation between exiled filmmakers, strengthening their ties to transnational social and political networks, and it also highlighted their collective transcendence of a strictly national political identities. At the same time, it turned their attention to the very nature of what citizenship meant within the context of a military regime or, later, a neo-liberal democracy.

Those filmmakers that survived and returned to their homes in the mid-1980s tended to become involved in the changing landscape of “transition” politics and collective memory debate, working to create a

place for political cinema in the renegotiation of democratic cultural and civil life. They made films which took on the subject of the dictatorship's many abuses, chronicling in both fiction and testimonial film the many forms of violence used by the military, bringing to light the nature of state repression and its many casualties. Several films considered the impact of the practice of disappearance on families and calls for justice. Others turned their attention to silences among communities, culpability, and reconciliation. These films were well attended by Argentines curious to understand the recent past and received critical attention abroad. However, by the 1990s, these filmmakers' political projects for the national film had been broadsided by the increasing advance across the region of neo-liberal projects of economic development, the success of video and cable formats in media distribution, and flagging domestic consumption of political cinematic fare. The decline of the big national studio, as in many other parts of the world, created an opening for Hollywood films to flood the market, which out-competed national films and further depressed the industry. Independent film producers, however, found some encouragement in new cultural policies that limited the extent to which film workers' unions and industrial leaders would be able to negotiate market rules. This deregulation and flexibilization of the market, combined with the subsequent digital media revolution, encouraged small-budget productions that didn't rely on box-office returns for their success. In this new and increasingly digital media environment, the political documentary film became a medium of choice for many new directors, first in a wave of testimonial-style films made by a limited number of politically engaged directors, but later as an integral part of emerging social movements, with films being made by non-traditional filmmakers, sometimes by people with very little formal training and no ties to film schools or to media industries and its labor associations.⁸

Argentine cinema's global reputation for political filmmaking, articulated through the experience of exiled directors involved in *nuevo cine latinoamericano*, by the 1990s, lent itself to constructing a national history of cinema that featured a leading role for Argentine cinema in the Third Cinema movement that took place across Africa, Asia, and the Americas. The work of celebrated formerly exiled directors like Solanas and Birri were studied in cinema schools and emerging film studies courses and programs as prototypes of the kind of cinema that would facilitate goals such as that of communicating class struggle to wider audiences, articulating a vision of national liberation or anti-imperialism, and representing the suffering of marginalized and repressed peoples across the global south. Newly emerging filmmakers by the late 1990s, embraced New Argentine Cinema as an artistic movement that echoed that inheritance but could also be taken up by many cultural critics and art communities, particularly by those that saw an opportunity to further extend the forms of political cinema. Some saw

the opening presented by independent and low-budget cinema as a valid means by which to not only document but also denounce authoritarianism in Argentina for an outside audience committed to a human rights agenda and in tension with the political and economic aftermaths of military rule and Cold War conflict. Into this space also appeared a form of documentary filmmaking championed by a new generation of filmmakers in Argentina that were able to secure external funding and INCAA support to produce political documentary film to reframe Argentina's position in the construction of a solidarity as less articulated within an internationalist framework and more in a common struggle as part of a global south suffering from a general crisis of neoliberalism. The phenomenon of Argentine *documentalismo* of the late 1990s and early 2000s drew on previous genres of documentary filmmaking including the testimonial, denunciationalist cinema, militant cinema, *cine de memoria*, Peronist propaganda documentary, and a handful of critical avant-garde or experimental movements, but what was unique about this new boom in production was the degree and facility with which it moved beyond national spaces. In addition, Argentine politically-driven fiction cinema also circulated at film festivals and classrooms in Seoul, Berlin, New York, Cairo, Cape Town, New Delhi, and even though many directors were not always able to afford travel themselves, affordable formats for distribution made it possible for their films to circulate widely at low cost.

El Bonaerense and “terrible parallel realities”

While in a sense all filmmaking can be considered political on some level, Argentina's reputation as political film capital of the global south reflects not only the sheer volume and quality of its political cinema over time but also the transnational networks built by directors in exile and further advanced by younger generations of filmmakers interested in further developing transnational ties. Argentine filmmakers were able to shape an external viewpoint on Argentina's political reality that challenged official narratives of the democratic transition and of the success of neoliberalism in advancing economic prosperity. Taking just one film, *El Bonaerense* (2002), as an example of the way that Argentine cinema advanced a vision of post-Cold War, post-dictatorship Argentina, the manner in which the political networks created across these two generations of filmmakers can be examined (Aguilar and Trapero 2008). Directed by Pablo Trapero and co-produced by Argentine companies Matanza Cine and Pol-ka Productions, the film also counted on co-production support from Studio Canal and Programa Ibermedia Fonds Sud Cinema in France, the International Film Festival of Rotterdam sponsored by the Humberto Bals Fund, and the INCAA.

The drama of the film centers on the story of Zapa, a locksmith who through a bit of bad luck ends up becoming a police officer in a rough

neighborhood of Buenos Aires. Zapa, played by actor Jorge Román, enters the grim reality of urban policing, discovering and quickly becoming complicit in corruption, extortion, and personal compromise. Following the disastrous events of Zapa's short career as a policeman, the film highlights the incomplete democratic transition following the last military dictatorship, the impunity with which the state continued to impose violence on the poor, and the despair awaiting many for whom Argentina's neo-liberal economic promises had fallen short. Zapa's experience mirrors that of many working-class Argentines who were caught between opposing forces during the Cold War, unsure how to navigate the complex situations presented by a rising level of militancy on the left and the vagaries of various crack-downs issued by a corrupt government. It illustrates the means by which complicity stemmed sometimes from the absence of a safe middle ground or through the presentation of illicit opportunity. The film also invited the audience into the physical spaces of the police precinct and station, offering access to the very sites where many acts of violence were committed against protestors, students, and other enemies of the military regime, visually connecting the two periods in their uncanny conformity. The character of Zapa is not presented in a sympathetic manner. He is not an innocent forced to adapt to a harsh reality. He is very much a denizen of this reality and seems to acclimate quickly, taking so well to his new position that he attracts the attention of a love interest and his Deputy Inspector, played by actor Dario Levy. The film is simultaneously the evidence of corrupt patterns of behavior that were allowed to flourish over decades of state violence and a strong critique of the strident claims of the democratic government to have excised itself from the errors of its past. It called to account those that issued a narrative of a successful transition, and further, cast doubt on other fictions of narrative, such as a decrease of foreign intervention implied by the avowal of the Cold War's end.

The means by which this critical narrative reached a broader audience across the global south can be traced by examining the particular way that its political activity was conducted both on and off-screen. First, *El Bonarense* followed a specific circuit of production, which in and of itself must be considered as a part of its political action. Pablo Trapero as a director had only had one other feature film produced prior to *El Bonarense*, *Mundo Grúa* (1999), a film which established Trapero as a serious director, co-produced by Lita Stantic, whose reputation as a political filmmaker had been well established through her association with liberation cinema in the 1970s and by her 1993 film *Un Muro de Silencio* (1993), which issued a strong critique of middle class complacency and complicity in the crimes of the military regime. *Mundo Grúa* established Trapero's filmmaking as inherently political as he took on questions of the unemployed and frustrated workers in the wake of a significantly debilitated labor movement after the dictatorship. And his

collaboration with Stantic, whose reputation and advocacy of political cinema in the 1990s helped to push the state to issue film credits targeted to filmmakers whose work might not otherwise find production support, likely also contributed to the film's eventual success at securing co-production assistance from INCAA. These associations may also have contributed to securing support from European production funds, and partnering with these production companies virtually assured the film of a place in international film festivals and positioned it within a longer tradition of Argentine political cinema supported by these networks.

Secondary to its production history, but perhaps more importantly, *El Bonaerense* also became an artefact of ideological representation. It circulated as a comment on the 2001 financial crisis, playing on an international market for poverty-as-disaster films that underlined the failings of political systems of the global periphery. Trapero's sophomore film was far better received abroad than his first, particularly in Spain and France, where it was featured on more screens and for a greater number of weeks than anywhere else. Sales from international box offices far outpaced the film's domestic sales, giving a sense that the true market for this kind of cinema was abroad. Reviews and interviews with the director emphasized political fragmentation left in the wake of the dictatorship, denunciation of the economic and social inequalities, Argentina's 2001 financial crisis and its relationship to the pursuit of foreign capital, and the "terrible parallel realities" with which Argentine society has had to reconcile itself with regard to state violence (Salles 2003, 65; Roy 2005, 26). Most critics commented on the close connections between the political filmmaking of the 1960s, connecting the film to a long history of denunciatory filmmaking, and that of the post-dictatorship period, reminding readers of the celebrity of military coups and human rights abuses in the region. The transnational solidarity activism that flourished during the 1970s and early 1980s in protest of Argentina's military dictatorship, beyond providing sites of support in exile, in effect, seemed to also have managed to travel through time to facilitate a new conversation about Argentine politics on the international stage. However, although also this connection provided a clearly identifiable political space for the work of this subsequent generation of filmmakers, it shaped the conversation in a way that refused Argentine perspectives full entry into a debate about possible futures of the global south in a post-Cold War world.

Trapero's critique of the failures of both Argentine democracy and the neoliberal economy were received by audiences that had previously celebrated the end to dictatorship and felt that international pressure, particularly organized around human rights campaigns, had made measurable progress. The challenge presented by *El Bonaerense* reveals the means by which the political economy of cultural production built through these networks created a space to continue shaping changing

perspectives on Argentina's historical experience. The transnational dimensions of this political economy in Argentina have not only been key to the reception of critical political filmmaking but have also allowed for this networked set of audiences to examine their own perceptions of what these movements meant and to build nuanced interpretations (Page 2009). In particular, Trapero's bleak vision of working-class neighborhoods and political realities allowed audiences to grapple with what it meant to abandon the labor movement as a part of Argentina's more militant left in favor of a human rights focused support for a more centrist transition government that did little to rebuild what was lost in the defeat of unions. In a crucial way, this new form of filmmaking held space for the voicing of new concerns and the issue of renewed calls to action by Argentina's post-dictatorship political left, which in turn would eventually help to operationalize transnational solidarity activism from outside of Argentina again in the wake of the 2001 financial crisis.

The New Left and Activist Cinema

Argentine political films made after 2001, like *El Bonaerense*, predominantly independent, have found a way around complex national industry law through funding from international foundations with commitments to broadly defined transnational solidarity and have continued to draw attention to the country's political division and economic experience. The ability to seek funding from organizations and film festivals abroad, production companies, and circuits of exhibition and distribution, has meant that a generation of filmmakers have been able to ensure for themselves a degree of freedom from the Argentine market, and this has of necessity meant that the same kind of censorship and repression of earlier periods would be unlikely to be applied in quite the same way again. However, by moving beyond national production, an indirect cost has come to cinema's labor unions and local industry, and to a certain extent also to Argentina's political left. In many ways, the work of crafting transnational production networks has had the effect of prioritizing an international vantage point in constructing a narrative of Argentina's past. For example, one outgrowth of *documentalismo* has been building solidarity networks around co-productions and sponsorship is that some of Argentina's most politically engaged directors eventually migrate from the Southern Cone to Western Europe, the United States, and Canada. With the aim of eventually securing a position working abroad, it is not infrequent that directors turn to filmmaking that resonates with international audiences in such a way as to be widely received, catering to themes well-established as points of interest within networks of historical investment. During the initial boom of documentary filmmaking, many films focused on revisiting the many crimes of the dictatorship, and it was not until later that these themes were able to thematics would broaden out.

While much can be said about the ability of political documentary films to raise global consciousness and draw attention to important failures of the transition and the neo-liberal economic policies inherited from the Cold War, there are several issues raised by the new transnational structures of political film networking that relate to the objectives of the emerging New Left in Argentina that merit closer consideration. The New Left can be described loosely as those political parties that emerged after the opening to democracy that sought an improvement of social welfare conditions that went beyond the pursuit of justice for victims of the dictatorship, the primary focus of the more centrist-leaning policies embraced by the transition government of Alfonsín. While these New Left parties have struggled to rebuild and maintain membership, several critical issues began to unite their positions, the first of which was the plight of those living in extreme poverty, particularly those living in the *villas de miseria*, or shantytowns, on the outskirts of major cities. Many directors, including veteran director Fernando Solanas, began to make films to expose the conditions of those living in squalid conditions, his films *Genocidia social* and *La Dignidad de los nadies* met with international acclaim and were successful at directing attention to Argentina's post-dictatorship neo-liberal economic reality. However, these films within Argentina were critiqued on the grounds that it was unclear whether or not the subjects of these films were given any voice or considered by the director to have any true agency within their lives. Begging the question of who was speaking for whom and within what context of authority, some critics argued that Solanas, who had been elected to Senate and even made an unsuccessful run for president, sought increased influence by managing and representing the collective agency of these groups.

At the same time, documentary films were being made by members of these groups, notably by film collectives organized by political organs such as that of the *piquetero* movement and by workers involved in factory take-overs, many of whom were interested in using newly affordable technologies and existing transnational film networks to present their causes to an international public that might be interested in taking solidarity action or lending intellectual support. Within Argentina, most of these new films circulated via political rally, with screens set up on university campuses or at protest events, and were shared by politically engaged movement participants, students, and those trying to find a way to organize viable political activists (Stites Mor 2012, 149–52). YouTube also presented a means by which these films could reach a wider audience, and the constant “reporting” work of some documentalistas resulted in a kind of alternative news service. Mirroring an earlier period, in which the filmmaker found his place in the “registration of reality” (Bernini 2004, 166), these filmmakers were able to situate their critiques merely by presenting raw footage within a technologically democratized new media space. Transnational networks simultaneously benefited the transit and movement of these films across

borders, and virtually via the internet, and at the same time made possible the flows of ideas about what was truly at stake in Argentina's democracy. Over time, this would become an increasingly important political resource, as populism re-emerged under the Peronist administrations of Néstor and Cristina Kirchner.

Despite the entrance of the popular sector into the digital filmmaking revolution in the post-2001 boom, many among the political left were concerned about who was really profiting from the increased profile of this kind of work. An additional concern issued from these communities surrounds the extent to which these globalized forms of digital media might actually undermine legitimate national authority and indirectly reinforce the post-colonial patterns within the industry. In this vein, independent filmmakers and co-producers are charged with taking on the responsibilities of the state to enact fair labor practices and the co-produced or the internet access film does not have to follow the guidelines required of a national export good. This exercise of independence from the nation-state in being able to create political cinema has the potential to feed into neoliberalism's model of a shrinking state and an absence of the protections and capabilities that might come along with such a role for the state.

Along these lines, the question emerges as to whether or not these films might only reproduce narratives of "Argentina as politically and socially backwards" rather than helping to advance a constructive or more equitable relationship between global north and south. Politicized documentary filmmaking in Argentina has become a transnational solidarity network that includes temporary visitors, "activist tourists", to Argentina from around the world. The most watched film on the subject of Argentina's occupied factories movement is actually Naomi Klein's 2004 film *The Take*, a film which includes many factual errors and misleadingly oversimplified representations of the workers' political situations. The New Left in Argentina in the early 2000s was already struggling to maintain a presence in national and provincial elections, while fears of a collapsing, corrupt, and impoverished democracy were easily stoked by populist contenders of more centrist parties. Transnational solidarity networks of cinema may not have the capacity to sufficiently raise awareness about the struggles at the heart of the left's challenges to populism and or neo-liberalism, such as in the case of the presidential election of Mauricio Macri, surely one of Argentine history's most right-wing elected officials, a friend of Donald Trump, with family ties directly to the disappearance of leftists during the previous military period.

Conclusion

The South-South solidarity movements that emerged in spaces of dislocation, exile, and internationalist revolution during the Cold War relied on a

politics of mutual concern. This kind of transnational solidarity operated “in spite of not having any formal mechanisms for decision-making, social criticism, collective action or even ascription of responsibilities,” (Scholz 1998, 5). However, there is also a temporal dimension to these movements. The transnational filmmaking networks that facilitated a meaningful form of agency for Argentine leftists in exile was situated in a Cold War past. Recovering this mode of solidarity to reposition Argentine political realities in a post-Cold War model of solidarity means revisiting the material, political and social spaces within which films like these would circulate and operate. What these solidarity movements generated among activists and actors involved in providing counternarratives to those of repressive regimes in Latin America or resistance to the hegemony of the U.S. in the region provided a foundational past life from which later moments were able to meaningfully draw strength, validation, and connection. However, the radical goal of these movements was the creation of positive duties, of reciprocal concern and ongoing refusal, and not the reduction of the notion of solidarity to a gesture or a means by which to further justify lasting structural inequalities. In the post-Cold War era, transnational solidarity through film follows a different course, that of affective solidarity, or one that builds on emotional ties between distant parties, hinging on the perception of distinctness. It is clear that the work of earlier Argentine cinema solidarity networking in exile communities and upon return facilitated the creation of long-term support for political filmmakers that aspired to critique the Argentine state, but the failure of the post-Cold War model is in its reliance on markets, technologies, and futures that are not revolutionary at all.

Film has the power to channel natural, empathetic impulses toward specific understandings of events and ideas. In the public sphere, where audiences are able to select by reading, listening to, viewing, and experiencing ideas through media, film has distinct advantages. As Frantz Fanon writes in *Black Skin, White Mask*, “the task of solidarity is not to see the other as oneself, but to see the other through his own eyes” (Hooker 2009, 9); what better way to do this than to put a camera lens to stand in for the eyes of the other through whom we are being asked to see? However, despite the ties created between groups funding documentary film in the immediate post-dictatorship period and grassroots activist filmmakers, one of the consequences of these constructions and framings has been a reinforcement of a politics of representation that privileges the organization of power relations between Argentine filmmakers and film industries and markets in Europe, the U.S., and Canada. If *El Bonaerense* has one central theme, it is that of powerlessness, the inability to direct the future course of one’s life, due to multiple and intersecting structural failures. Trapero’s film thus reminds the viewer of the very precariousness of political agency upon which his own creative enterprise relies.

Notes

- 1 The author would like to thank the editors of the volume for their comments and critiques of earlier drafts.
- 2 I write more extensively about the social and political history of filmmakers in this period in chapter 2 of *Transition Cinema*.
- 3 For a far more extensive discussion of Argentine political cinema during various periods during the Cold War and its aftermath, see Lusnich and Piedras 2011.
- 4 Michael Chanan writes extensively about the role Havana played in the circulation of these and other politically minded directors Cuba (2004). Other important sites of exile connection and exchange included Mexico City, Paris, Prague, Rome (Yankelevich 2016; Franco 2007; and Zourek 2019).
- 5 Eventually, Fernando Birri would help found the New Latin American Cinema Foundation and would be regularly invited to teach in Havana's international film school.
- 6 For more on the industrial history of this period see Hortiguera and Rocha 2007.
- 7 For a good overview of "New Argentine Cinema" as a genre, see Andermann 2011; Rocha 2009; and Aguilar 2008.
- 8 For more on Argentine political documentary cinema see Traverso and Crowder-Taraborrelli 2013.

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Part III

**Literature and Print
Culture Itineraries**



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11 War, Famine, and Newsprint: The Making of Soviet India, 1942–1945

Vikrant Dadawala

How do you write the history of a mirage, of an illusion embedded in yellowing newsprint? This chapter analyzes the archives of the *People's War*, the weekly newspaper of the Communist Party of India (CPI) from 1942 through 1945, in order to recreate the late colonial imagination of a possible “Soviet India”—in all of its optimism, ambition, and hubris. Partly due to its path-breaking coverage of the devastating Bengal famine of 1943 in the form of photographs by Sunil Janah (1918–2012) and sketches by Chittaprosad (1915–1978), and partly due to the leeway allowed to the newspaper by British censors in return for the CPI's belated support of the war effort, the *People's War* came to acquire an unprecedented national readership during a critical juncture in modern South Asian history. As the first major communist newspaper in South Asia (published simultaneously in English, Hindi, Urdu, and Marathi), the *People's War* was not just a tightly-controlled organ for the dissemination of the changing political position of the CPI politburo, in line with the flip-flops of the Comintern. It was also a text through which the young colonial subjects who were its readers saw themselves as participating in a project of world-revolution.

My aim is not to write a history of the CPI but to spotlight the importance of the communist newspaper in the late colonial world—as a technology knitting together a multi-racial and multi-lingual community of dispersed activists into a coherent, internationalist public, and as a “leitmotif” of the communist imagination, from Lenin to the Indian Left (Banerjee 2014). In a famous essay titled “Where to Begin?”, Lenin ([1901] 2001) had argued that the first step taken by any revolutionary party should be the establishment of a national newspaper—for the dissemination of ideas, to facilitate political education, and for the enlistment of political allies. For Lenin, the function of a revolutionary newspaper was as essential as that of “scaffolding around a building under construction”, marking the contours of the structure-to-come and facilitating communication and harmony among the builders. However, unlike Lenin, and unlike their contemporaries in China or Vietnam, the first generation of Indian communists—the readers of *People's War*—never quite came

close to capturing power on a national level (though they did serve as the largest party of opposition in the Indian Parliament in the 1950s and helped shape independent India's policies of Non-Alignment and *dirigisme* during the Cold War years). It is from the "scaffolding" of the *People's War* that we must reconstruct the shape and form of the hypothetical Soviet India, a vision of the future that transformed India's political landscape on the eve of decolonization. From Bollywood films in the 1950s to the trajectory of modernism in Indian literature, from peasant struggles in Bengal and Telangana to Indian diplomatic policy in the United Nations—few aspects of life in the newly independent nation remained untouched by the shadow of Soviet India.

As such, this chapter attempts to expand our understanding of the 'cultural Cold War' beyond the authors, archives, and milestones usually associated with it. In the years since Frances Stonor Saunders' *Who Paid the Piper?* (1999), scholars researching the cultural Cold War have excavated a story of betrayal and compromise worthy of a John le Carré novel—replete with shadowy spymasters, secret deals, and liberals with a troubled conscience.¹ However, their overwhelming reliance on the archives of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) and other CIA-sponsored cultural fronts has produced a resilient blind-spot in the literature: narratives of the cultural Cold War tend to either bypass the postcolonial world altogether, or reduce it to the site of a proxy conflict between superpower-patrons. As the essays in this volume demonstrate, artists and intellectuals in the former Third World often had their own ideas of what was at stake in the Cold War—rather than being "tricked" or "played" by a foreign agency, many Third World intellectuals consciously chose to align themselves with a side in what they saw as a global cultural struggle. In the case of India in particular, the cultural Cold War did not begin with the formation of the CCF in 1950, but with the October Revolution of 1917. Despite the elaborate censorship and surveillance regime put in place by British Intelligence officials, the Bolsheviks fascinated intellectuals in interwar India—including figures as diverse as future Prime Minister Nehru, the young revolutionary terrorist Bhagat Singh (who read Lenin while on death row in Lahore Jail), and the Islamic philosopher-poet Muhammad Iqbal (later recognized as the national poet of Pakistan). By the time the first CIA-sponsored CCF Conference took place in India in 1951, Indian intellectuals and writers were already enthusiastic Cold Warriors, either in thrall to the idea of a possible "Soviet India" or terrified by it.² It is this colonial 'pre-history' of the cultural Cold War that the rest of this chapter explores.

A Time of War and Famine

The period between 1942–45 was a pivotal moment in the making of modern South Asia. As World War II raged on, Gandhi's call to the

British to “Quit India” (on 8th August, 1942) sparked massive demonstrations, strikes, and attempts to create insurgent zones of self-rule. With Japanese forces advancing on the eastern borders of British India, the colonial state cracked down on the Quit India movement and jailed most of the leadership of the Congress Party. Steadily deteriorating relations between the Muslim League and the Congress saw the region inch closer and closer toward the genocidal violence of Partition. And in 1943, the province of Bengal found itself in the grips of a catastrophic famine, exacerbated by wartime conditions and colonial apathy, that resulted in the deaths of an estimated two million people (Greenough 1982; Srimanjari 2009; Mukherjee 2015). Against this rather grim backdrop, the heroic images of soldiers, peasants, and workers from the pages of the *People’s War* functioned as tantalizing tableaux of a possible “Soviet India”: enacting a dress rehearsal of the solemn tasks ahead, and promising a vision of redemption in the future.

For South Asian communists, the later years of World War II were a time of paradoxes. Following the entry of the Soviet Union into the war, the British Empire re-evaluated its attitude toward Indian communists, turning to them as possible allies. After some internal dissent, the CPI worked out an unprecedented deal with the colonial government that led to the release of the senior party leaders from jail. In return for a commitment to produce propaganda in favor of the war effort and against Gandhi’s Quit India movement, the communists were allowed an unprecedented legal access to the public sphere (Overstreet and Windmiller 1959, 191–222; Bhattacharya 1995). From its headquarters in Sandhurst Road, Bombay, the CPI (under the leadership of the twenty-eight-year-old P. C. Joshi) engineered a dramatic and unprecedented expansion of the South Asian communist public, reaching out to the intelligentsia through the rapidly mushrooming branches of cultural fronts like the Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA), the Progressive Writers’ Association (PWA), and various Indo-Soviet Friendship Societies and Cine-Clubs (Dasgupta 2005; Chakravartty 2014). At the same time, membership in communist-led Trade Unions, Peasant Fronts and other mass organizations also boomed dramatically, partly enabled by the large-scale arrests of Congress leaders and activists (Overstreet and Windmiller, 366–405). For the first time in colonial India, communist newspapers were to be openly sold on street corners, allowing a dispersed group of activists to come together into a coherent, internationalist, “imagined community”, organized around a vision of the future to come.

But for some, this expansion came at too great a political cost, exposing the CPI to lingering accusations of having played a “traitorous role” in the nationalist movement as a proxy for Soviet interests (Batliwala 1946). The CPI’s enthusiastic support for the Muslim League’s demand for an Islamic homeland (in line with their

interpretation of Stalin’s policy on the “national question”), and its opposition to the Quit India movement, drove a lasting wedge between them and the Congress party and doomed communist attempts to capture the left-wing of the Congress from within. Gandhi himself would lead the charge against the CPI, writing petulant letters questioning the young party’s sources of funding and patronage as well as its claims to speak on behalf of the “people” (“Correspondence ...” 1945). On occasions, this acrimony would turn violent, such as when a mob of Congress supporters attacked the CPI party office and press, incensed by an article in the *People’s War* (Thapar 1991, 28–29).

Rather than critiquing the CPI for cloaking its faith in a foreign power in the garb of scientific reasoning, as many historians have done, this chapter takes a closer look at the poetics of how the Indian communist imagination came to be so “indelibly marked” by the distant Soviet Union (Vasudevan 2017, 506). I suggest that the reflexive circulation of visual culture—through newspapers, pamphlets, and celluloid—was at the heart of how a dispersed group of activists and artists came to see themselves as participants in a global battle between fascist and anti-fascist forces. During the war, identification with a distant Soviet Union was an existential component of what it meant to be a communist, as the Telangana peasant leader and future general-secretary of the CPI, C. Rajeswara Rao (1998), attested:

In those days, the titanic battle was on between the antifascist and fascist forces. The Soviet Union was fighting a life-and-death struggle with the hordes of Hitler not only on its behalf but on behalf of the whole of humanity. It was a time of tremendous tension and grave anxiety for every communist and progressive. As such a time it was both enlightening and inspiring to read the reviews that Doctor Adhikari [editor of the *People’s War* from mid-1943 to 1945] was making every week of the military and political situation. We not only used to wait restlessly every week for the party’s central organ [*the People’s War*] but when it came we used to turn first to Doctor Adhikari’s articles. I must say that apart from the fine analysis and solid factual basis, what gripped us was the burning passionate faith of the author in the Soviet Union (42).

The “burning passionate faith” and commitment that the Soviet Union inspired in Indian leftists was not simply a strategic choice but the essential affective undergirding of the political imaginary of Soviet India. The circulation of heroic images of men and women from the Soviet Union reflected the desire of Indian communists to discipline their own bodies out of colonial backwardness into postcolonial modernity, and to reorient images of the Indian village away from static Gandhian idealizations toward a utopian, collective, and future-oriented temporality (Figure 11.1).



PEOPLE'S WAR

SOVIET NUMBER

Vol. II, No. 19

Sunday, November 7, 1943

As 3

Figure 11.1 The first 'Soviet Number' of the *People's War* (November 7, 1943; front cover). A giant Red Army soldier holds up a flag emblazoned with the faces of Lenin and Stalin, as World War II rages on behind him. Courtesy of the Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania.

Newsprint and Nation: The Making of ‘Soviet India’

Imagine, for a moment, that you are an intelligence officer in the service of the British Empire, circa 1920–1935, tasked with stopping the inflow of dangerous Bolshevik ideas into colonial India. The news from Moscow is grim: a ‘Communist University of the Toilers of the East’ has been set up and Indian exiles have begun dispatching emissaries armed with propaganda back home. Active attempts are being made to set up an Indian Communist Party affiliated with the Third International, both abroad (at Tashkent in 1920) and closer home (in the industrial city of Kanpur in 1925). What steps can you take? Ban the import of any Bolshevik literature and arrest the violators of this order, whether British or Indian? Set up an extensive network of spies and informers, and keep a secret watch on the political activities of Indian students and exiles abroad? Declare the newly formed Communist Party of India illegal, and put its leaders on trial in conspiracy cases?

In practice, the colonial state did all of this and more, setting up an extensive censorship and surveillance regime that became the “primary stumbling block erected to prevent early communists from setting up a viable network inside India” (Chattopadhyay 2011, 119). A vigilant customs office collected extensive piles of proscribed communist tracts, that now lie scattered in archives in Delhi and London like so many unexploded bombs. Colonial intelligence departments gathered top-notch information about Indian Bolsheviks at home and abroad; indeed, it is from their handbooks and files that the Communist Party would later reconstruct its own history. With the Kanpur and Meerut Bolshevik Conspiracy cases of 1924 and 1929, virtually the entire leadership of the fledgling CPI was rounded up and put behind bars.³

In a famous poem from his “Red” days, the poet Langston Hughes (1995 [1946]) described Lenin as a phantasmic figure who could move seamlessly across the planet, unimpeded by national boundaries: “Lenin walks around the world/ Black, brown, and white receive him/ Language is no barrier/ The strangest tongues believe him” (Hughes 1995, 318). What Hughes does not spell out, what his poem takes for granted as its own condition of possibility, is the means through which “Lenin” walked around the planet: communist newspapers and periodicals. The formidable censorship regime set up by the British colonial state could not stop “Lenin” from entering India, but they did ensure that his presence remained covert and underground during the interwar years. The short-lived communist periodicals of the late 1920s—such as *Ganavani* (Bengali), *Krantikari* (Hindi), *Kranti* (Marathi), and *Mehnat Kash* (Urdu)—faced constant police harassment, and were shut down after the Meerut Conspiracy Case. The few Marxist books that were available in communist circles were carefully guarded and passed from

hand to hand, so much so that a single reader may have access to a text for one sleepless night alone (Chari 1975, 46–47). Even to the select few admitted to the party, the Soviet Union was mostly a distant, half-mythic space, a collage of impressions cobbled together from Russian literature, hostile newspaper reports in the Anglo-Indian press (read against the grain), and the future Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's sympathetic but somewhat naïve travelogue of the Soviet Union published in 1928 (Joshi 2014, 267).

It was only in 1942, with the entry of the Soviet Union into World War II as an ally of the British, that the Communists were able to stake a full legal claim on the public spheres of colonial India, replacing their secret, underground press with a new linotype machine. From its party headquarters in Sandhurst Road, Bombay, the CPI published the *People's War* as part of its multi-pronged strategy to exploit the unprecedented national publicity made possible by its understanding with the colonial state. The years between 1942 and 1945 saw the numbers of CPI members rise dramatically – from 4,500 in 1942 to over 30,000 full-time members by 1945 (Overstreet and Windmiller, 448–449). By the beginning of 1943, the *People's War* claimed a total circulation of over 33,000 in all its editions (English, Hindi, Urdu, and Marathi). Adding provincial newspapers in Bengali, Punjabi, Telegu, Malayalam, and Tamil to these numbers, the CPI claimed to have more than 60,000 subscribers for their weekly newspapers, spread across British India (*ibid.*). This number is probably a serious understatement: there is no reliable way of estimating the actual readership of the newspaper given the widespread South Asian practice of multiple newspaper readers sharing a single copy. As such, in the space of just three or four years, the CPI transformed from a criminal political organization into one that could count the editors of the most important newspapers in English, Urdu, and Hindi among the subscribers of its party newspaper.

This was an incredible transformation for a party that had spent decades either in jail or underground. Doubling as a commune, the CPI headquarters became a key node in the country's cultural and intellectual life during the 1940s. Professed politics aside, this was a milieu dominated by 'traditional' cultural elites, who were confident of their place in history and their own ability to shape the literary and cultural life of the soon-to-be independent nation.⁴ On a typical day, the office would be presided over by the bespectacled, twenty-eight-year-old P. C. Joshi, wearing his trademark shorts, looking more like an earnest graduate student than an Indian Lenin. The other editorial staff gathered around him might include the likes of Gangadhar Adhikari ("Doctor"), who held a Ph.D. in Chemical Science from Berlin and edited the English edition of the paper from 1943; Sajjad Zaheer ("Banne Miyan"), the Oxford-educated poet from a prominent Shia family of Lucknow who

edited the Urdu edition; Mohan Kumaramangalam, the Cambridge-educated descendent of a prominent *zamindar* [landlord] family who served as the paper's chief correspondent; or Rahul Sankritayanan, the polyglot philosopher and scholar of Buddhism from the United Provinces, then using his considerable erudition for the humble task of compiling a volume of flattering profiles of party leaders. Those dropping by to volunteer their services as typists and proof-readers included left-wing British soldiers on leave as well as wealthy socialites braving the "urine-infested" smell of the headquarters (Thapar, 14).

From the perspective of the central leadership, a national newspaper represented an opportunity to bring together dispersed underground factions into a disciplined Leninist party, committed to "proletarian internationalism" i.e. the rather difficult task of closely identifying with the interests of a distant socialist homeland, known only through words and images. The party's miraculous access to newsprint in a period of war-time rationing allowed the *People's War* to become one of the most well-produced publications of its time, probably the first Indian newspaper to devote space to extensive photo-stories (Janah 2013, 15). A headline from the very first issue (2nd August, 1942)—Chinese, Soviets, Indians: 800,000,000 together—set the tone for the newspaper's attempt to represent a seamlessly international revolutionary public, as did the frequently featured letters from British, Chinese, and Russian communists addressing Indian leaders. From 1942 to '45, the back page of the *People's War* was typically a page-length update on the Eastern front of World War II, with the Red Army framed as the noble and heroic protagonist of the global war against fascism. A constant flow of articles and photographs offered palpable, tactile proof of Soviet "successes" in collective farming, industrialization, and 'nation-building' – the integration of diverse ethnicities and languages into one state. While it is difficult for us today to think of these images of smiling Soviet farmers and bumper harvests as anything but formulaic propaganda, in late colonial India, however, these images would have had the ability to go beyond ideological messaging to prick, bruise, and existentially captivate individual viewers in unexpected ways—what Roland Barthes called the *punctum* effect of photography.

As the CPI struggled against the nationalist backlash to its support for the British war effort, the circulation of the *People's War* came to occupy a key position in its quest to produce committed Bolshevik cadres out of a loose and dispersed federation of volunteers. Calling for a nation-wide drive to aggressively expand the circulation of the then three-month-old *People's War* through the sale of newspapers and the signing up of new subscribers, an editorial dictum dated 25 October 1942 constructed an image of the committed revolutionary as one always armed with a copy of the party newspaper. The Indian Bolshevik should always carry a

copy of the *People's War* and be ready to discuss its contents orally, with a wider public:

On your job, wherever you are, don't fence yourself off from the people, don't think you have "On Duty" and "Off Duty" hours. You are a Bolshevik not a clerk in a bourgeois office. Wherever you are, whether it is a railway compartment or a tea-shop, fraternize with the people, dig out "People's War" and read it out to them, discuss with them ... Discussing with the people, selling "People's War", collecting cash for the party – this should be your job wherever you are. Wherever there are people, there is a front of work for you.

A second subscription drive in February 1945 offered specific rewards to the best performing cadres, including copies of books with titles like *Landmarks in the Life of Stalin*, *Army of the Soviet Union*, and *Socialist Sixth of the World*. The prize for the Comrade who stood first in the country was a full set of Lenin's selected works (no longer as difficult to procure, thanks to the network of People's Publishing Houses and bookstores set up in 1942). Essentially, the incentive offered for circulating communist literature was to receive more such literature. As such, the real reward offered in 1942 and in 1945 remained the same—the possibility of transforming oneself, through self-discipline, into a true Bolshevik. Like flesh-and-blood "mobile newspapers", party workers were to "speak the newspaper" to those who were unable to read it but were eager to know, to debate, to fight, to understand" (Banerjee, 433). Years later, as the optimism of the early '40s faded away and was replaced by a bitter disillusionment regarding India's struggling economy and entrenched social inequalities, many Indian communists would nostalgically recall selling copies of *People's War* on the street as a decisive moment of transformation—in which they abandoned the confines of home and tradition and embraced the public persona of a revolutionary. This was especially true for women, as Ania Loomba (2019) has shown.

Two Fronts: The Bengal Famine and the Battle of Stalingrad

When a massive famine struck Bengal and other parts of British India in 1943, the *People's War* took advantage of its status as a legal, pro-war outlet to publish unprecedented coverage of food shortages. The circulation of the newspaper expanded dramatically. In a letter to the editor of *People's War*, the editor of the prestigious English-language newspaper *The Hindu* congratulated the *People's War* for its "yeoman service" in "prodding the authorities out of their complacency" in a time of famine

and distress (*PW*, 9th July 1944). In a similar vein, Professor D. P. Mukherjee of Lucknow University, a pioneering figure in Indian sociology, wrote of how his attitude toward the newspaper had changed over time:

Personally, my all India feeling has been sustained by the manner in which the famine in Bengal, Orissa, and the South has been handled in *People's War* *People's War* has been a great corrective to my prejudices (are they only mine?) and I am grateful for it. Only I would want it to be better and still better (*ibid.*).

Mukherjee's phrase, "my all India feeling," is idiosyncratic but also revealing, suggesting that the national circulation of appeals to solidarity in the face of 'regional' tragedies was a key component of how the communists knit together a multilingual network of activists and intellectuals, a counterpublic that continued to punch above its weight for many decades in postcolonial India.

The challenge of adequately representing the famine—narratively and visually—transformed the newspaper and created an unprecedented space for documentary photographs and sketches. As reports about the food crisis in Bengal began to make their way into the pages of the *People's War* with increasing frequency through 1943, they were accompanied by a series of pathbreaking, powerful images. The most famous of these were by the young Bengali duo of Chittaprosad (sketches, woodcuts, linocuts) and Sunil Janah (photographs), who somewhat fortuitously ended up accompanying the general-secretary P. C. Joshi on his tour of famine-affected regions in Bengal. Chittaprosad's and Janah's dispatches from Bengal circulated furiously through the length and breadth of colonial India, raising the profile of the *People's War* and turning the regional atrocity of the Bengal Famine into an essential component, the ground-zero, of the Indian communist imagination (Figure 11.2). Through the bare, minimalist lines of Chittaprosad's sketches and the straightforward, elemental compositions of Janah's photographs, readers across India were knit into a tight, affective community, haunted by the same suffering faces and by the same sense of shame and humiliation. The famine of 1943 came to be both a symbol of all that was broken beyond fixing in the colonial order, as well as a prism through which structural hunger and malnourishment became representable in the *People's War*. The reports on Bengal were immediately followed by similar reports on Orissa (23rd January, 1944; 16th April, 1944) and Kerala (9th July, 1944). Epidemics in other parts of the country would raise the rhetorical question: "How long before our whole country becomes Bengal or before our whole people come together to save her?" (30th July, 1944: Pg. 8). In one way or the other, this question would continue to haunt India (and Indian communists in



CHITTAGONG

Sketches from Life

by **CHITTAPRASAD**



The Story

CHITTAPRASAD was born in Midnapore district and spent his early youth in Chittagong and it is in these two districts that the people are suffering the worst. He is a self-taught artist and love of the people is the strength behind his brush.

(1) Nazir Ahmud, a peasant from North, starvation had driven him to the soulless district, Chittagong where he was found on the roadside. When asked his name he could not recollect it for 3 minutes.

(2) One of the many. A Muslim family of Fatehabad village. All male members dead from hunger.

(3) A tall broad boned fisherman, a section that is rapidly becoming extinct through starvation. Sitting on his mat on a cot inside the Relief Hospital, he could not reply to a single question by the artist, his head had gone all blank.

(4) A Muslim, unknown and unclaimed, sketched a few minutes before he died from an attack of cholera.

(5) A group of children, orphaned by the famine, picked up from the streets and brought to the orphanage. All stern and tense, the horror of what they have suffered writ large on their young faces.

(6) An orphaned fisherman 27½ who lost her eyes. Hunger had led to loss of honour. A two weeks' life of shame had given her ample government. Her eyes could not look up when she told her tale.

(7) This is the end. Dead, Hindu and Muslim, lying side by side, inside the Relief Hospital.

★

**HELP BENGAL
Fight Famine**

Guarantee that your own life, home, women and children are saved.

Send your help to:

People's Relief Committee, Bengal,
62, Bowbazar Street,
Calcutta.

REGD. No. 4677

November 28, 1943

Figure 11.2 “Sketches from Life” (People’s War, November 28, 1943; back cover): Chittaprasad’s sketches of the Bengal famine. Courtesy of the Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania.

particular), from the 1940s right through to the world food crises of the 1970s (Siegel 2018).

In recent years, there has been a revival of interest in the innovative and experimental art produced by the *People's War* team, as a “profound archive” of the laboring people of India—workers, peasants, toilers—on the cusp of a momentous socio-economic transformation (Dasgupta 2014). New retrospectives and studies have rekindled an interest in the epic monumentality of Chittaprosad's sketches and woodcuts: both his frighteningly bare famine diaries, as well as his stirring and optimistic sketches of peasant processions (Malik 2011). There has also been a revival of interest in the secular iconography of Sunil Janah's photography from the 1940s: in his tight frames and use of light and shadow to imbue suffering bodies with dignity (Roychoudhari 2017). However, as Ranu Roychoudhuri has pointed out, the journey of an image from the pages of a newspaper to the space of an art gallery necessarily involves a reconfiguration of contextual meaning. Within the ephemeral pages of the *People's War*, Janah and Chittaprosad's images were subject to the logic of juxtaposition of simultaneous events—“Soviet” and “Indian”—and it was this simultaneity that lent them a political (and not only humanist) meaning. If the front page of an issue featured Sunil Janah's harrowing photographs of famine-afflicted farmers, then the back page might be images of Soviet collective farms, and vice versa. Reports on Soviet military successes would rub shoulders with reports on malaria epidemics or famines in various parts of India. Consider two successive issues of *Loka Yuddha* (the Hindi edition of *People's War*) from November, 1943. The issue dated 7th November was a special Soviet number whose front page was a picture of a victorious Soviet soldier holding aloft a giant Red flag that hovered over the entire planet. Articles inside it included reports on the successes of Soviet industry, images of the new, emancipated Soviet woman, maps and write-ups with details of the *amara yuddha* [immortal battle] of Stalingrad. The backpage of the Soviet issue featured as photographs of the many *vīra* and *vīramganā* [heros and heroines] in the Red Army. The very next issue, dated 14th November 1943, was a special issue on the Bengal famine featuring Janah's photographs and Chittaprosad's travel diaries. It is the proximity between these images that defined their reception.

The *People's War* was indeed a war newspaper, reporting from the two parallel fronts of Soviet India: the Eastern Front of World War II and the Bengal famine. From the shadow of war and famine, utopian images of a new kind of “Soviet-Indian” farmer emerged in the *People's War*: this new farmer was a member of a co-operative, posed for photographs with clenched fists raised in the air, and was organized into cultural troupes that reinvented folk forms (for instance, the back

page of 16th July, 1944 or of 16th Aug, 1944). A photograph of a female farmer from Cochin, juxtaposed with another photograph of a group of female farmers, was captioned: “Not a collective from Soviet Land but the daughter of Cochin peasants (Figure 11.3). A pioneer worker in co-operative farming” (*People’s War*, 25th June, 1944). An article on co-operative farms in Uzbekistan was accompanied by a photograph of smiling farmers next to a rich harvest. The tempting headline read: “On the Soviet Pamirs, Nine Miles from India”. With just a stretch of a hand, the *People’s War* seemed to promise its readers, the dress-rehearsal of socialism that these images were enacting could become reality. The “nine miles” between the USSR and India could be bridged, and the “daughter of Cochin peasants” could transform into a Soviet farmer.

Conclusion: *People’s War* and the Horizon of History

In 1945, with the end of World War II, the *People’s War* was replaced by a new weekly, the *People’s Age*. As Partition split the subcontinent in 1947, the Communist Party of India split into two as well, dispatching Sajjad Zaheer across the border to serve as the founding general-secretary of the Community Party of Pakistan. In India, B.T Ranadive replaced P. C. Joshi as the general-secretary of the CPI, and adopted the more hard-line leftist slogan ‘*yeh azaadi jhoothi hai*’ [This is a false Independence], pushing the party underground. Many communist sympathizers were jailed and the party was banned till it re-committed itself to a “parliamentary path of struggle” in 1951 (Overstreet and Windmiller, 252–308). The return to legality in the 1950s saw a vast expansion in the network of communist-affiliated newspapers, complimented by a whole range of periodicals published in Indian languages on behalf of the Soviet Union—but no party newspaper or Soviet periodical became the kind of fetishized print-object that the *People’s War* had become in the conjuncture of war and famine.

Following the termination of the Popular Front policy of creating broad coalitions, the Bombay circle of “Progressives” orbiting the CPI headquarters, already missing many members post-Partition, began to disintegrate. Many writers, actors, and filmmakers drifted away from party-created organizational spaces, and those that remained had to adapt themselves to a far stricter adherence to an ever-changing party line. By the late 1950s, both members of the famous *People’s War* duo of Chittaprosad and Sunil Janah had either quit or been expelled from the party. Chittaprosad spent most of his working life in poverty, struggling to make ends meet, and died in 1978 (see Malik 2011 for a biography). After a period of obscurity, his work would be



Flag Holding. (From left) Sardar Prithvi Singh (with cap), Pandit Jaganandan Sharma, Pandit Karpanand Sharma.



No room inside the pandal—eager visitors climbed the trees for a view.

'A REVIVAL OF PEOPLE'S SPIRIT'

Two Years' Patriotic Campaign: Over 15,000 Kisans Rally

Bihar Prov. Kisan Conference

by Om Prakash Sangal

Fifteen to twenty thousand kisans came to attend the 11th Session of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha held at Lakshisarai, Monghyr, on June 17 and 18. It was the biggest mass rally during the period after 9th August, 1942. Repression had been fiercer in Bihar than in any other province and this mass gathering was a sign of the revival of the spirit of the people.

NEIGHBOUR of Bengal, kisan workers were going the Bihar is the land of poor cotton weavers, that, in campaigning peasants. The kisans here against sabotage they steeled suffered semi-starvation for a year, themselves. And when the kisans the price of rice had gone up to saw where sabotage had led the 1 or 1½ sere per rupee and even every day, their faith in the political leadership of their Sabha grew firmer.

Yashwanth Sharma, the President of the Session, said that, the Government Officers' agents of north Bihar were busy exporting war loans, the big on sweet potatoes, jack fruit Sabha led a campaign against and mangoes and epidemics polio disease and explained that like cholera, malaria, kala-azar and those who had the means alone had followed administration should pay. In Monghyr itself at least 100 villages were saved hard-over a long period.

Reception Committee Chairman, Karpanand Sharma stated that in the Monghyr district, the very venue Sabha interested a Grow More of the session, over 20% of the Post campaign and rallied the villages were post-ridden and 20% of the kisans to build mile-long bunds, cholera-stricken; he feared that to save their fields and themselves 30% of the peasants would lose from famine. (In the next number their land because of inability to pay, I shall give the story of some cultivate and hence for failure to remarkable feats of constructive pay the rent.)

Under such horrors people mor- Such patriotic campaigning and rally become full of despair, grateful service by the Kisan wherein then lay the source of Sabha naturally led to a new strength of the Kisan Sabha and awakening among the kisans and the enthusiasm of its workers; the oppression of the promoters' How was it that they were able to become led? There was no room to get from such distressed peo-panised the unit of their Sabha, sans 5 or 2% sere of grain for the zamindars, though twice be- plough for the expenses of the fore ejecting them or demanding Conference? heger.

It rained on both the days and how was it that 4,000 to 7,000 peas- among the kisans along not only ants, who had come from such enthused the kisan workers, but long distances as 60 to 70 miles, Congress workers of all shades of were able to put up with the Monghyr actively helped in col- lecting cash and making the Ses- sion a success. Various Congress was feeling utterly helpless. How leaders, including Sri Anandran did it happen that they were able Narayan Singh, ex-Pirane Min- to draw to this Session a larger 100 sent messages of solidarity number of Kisan workers from Congress Socialists had slandered other districts (about 500) than the Kisan Sabha. Released Ces- to any previous one; and that too gress leaders sent greetings to its from all the districts of Bihar? Session.

The frame were overcrowded, but Mr. Jafar Imam, President behind the enthusiasm of the League, also sent friendly mes- Kisan workers were their faith in hope, Swami Sahasranand in his the soundness of the patriotic speech not only fully wel- come of their Sabha. To account correct this, I have been in solidarity, for the mass response stood two but invited Congressmen and years of patriotic campaigning League's role in the service of and tireless service of the Kisan the kisans by joining their Sabha, masses.

After the experiences since fate- the Bihar Unit of the Congress for the Kisan workers to the Kisan Sabha. Dharmagadha face the Kisan's' cause and not to foot whole villages and upon them not to go in for sabot- did not fall into the clutches of the the side when the last mass of Congressmen and League.

Sardar Prithvi Singh unfurled the Red Flag. Resolutions were passed against political double-deal.

(Continued on Page 6.)



(Above), Cultural Squad giving a folk dance, Village-poet Premdas leading in the centre foreground (showing profile). (Below), A section of the audience inside the pandal.



People's War

Photos by Ramesh Bhattarai

REGD No. B 4677

Figure 11.3 "A Revival of People's Spirit" (People's War, July 17, 1944; back cover); photographs from a Kisan Sabha [Peasant's Union] meeting in Bihar. Courtesy of the Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania.

rediscovered in the late 1990s, packed away in large trunks and carefully preserved by his family. Janah suffered from depression through the 1950s and 60s and eventually gave up a promising photographic career to emigrate to England, his mind still “soaked in the history and legends of socialism” even after he was no longer a part of the Party (2013, 76).

In his memoirs, long since he had emigrated from India, Sunil Janah would recall his journeys on behalf of *People's War* in impressionable prose:

I travelled all over the country during those years. These travels did not merely mean getting in and out of trains to different and often distant destinations, but of journeys deep into the interiors of the countryside, walking for miles across hills and valleys with companions speaking strange languages. I spoke and understood only two of the twenty-six major languages, and their numerous dialects, spoken in India. What my escorts said to each other and to the villagers passing by was, most often, totally incomprehensible to me. I remember only their reassuring presence at my side in the wide open spaces of the country under a blazing sun, the blue skies, dark with rain clouds at times, the wheat and rice fields with their harvests of green and gold, the dust and distance, and the thatched village huts turning golden at the touch of the setting sun (Janah, 16).

As Janah's words remind us, for all of the focus on hardship and suffering, a sense of wonder, discovery and pride also permeates the pages of the *People's War*, often taking the form of a cartographic and ethnographic enchantment with the “wide open spaces” and many “strange languages” of the subcontinent. In 1944–45, with the moment of decolonization increasingly at hand, the newspaper would begin to devote its front pages to ethnographic collages celebrating the idea of India as a multinational entity, comprising as many as seventeen peoples and their homelands. There is something undeniably poignant about these collages of figures from pre-Partition India, captured in a state of waiting and expectation, often looking directly at us (Figure 11.4). We do not know the names of the anonymous individuals—beyond labels such as “A Peasant Beauty from Malabar” or “Grand Sikh Kisans”—who stand in for the multitudes in whose name the newspaper speaks (*People's War*, 24th July, 1944). Yet the very fact of their presence on the front page of the newspaper, as subjects whose time has come, seems to embody what Gary Wilder (2015) has, in a related context, called the “flash of possibility” between the “no-longer” of late colonialism and the “not yet” of the Cold War order.

On Pages 6-7
ILLUSTRATED STORY OF GANDHI-JINNAH MEETING



Dussehra grandeur

OUR GREAT PEOPLE



A peasant beauty from Malabar

PEOPLE'S WAR

VOL. III. NO. 13. SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1944. A.S. 3.

To Gandhiji And Jinnah Saheb

Not till you have blotted out the scars of hope deferred,
 Not till you have unfurled the banners of rejoicing,
 You have met—be it auspicious, the day of your sitting together!
 Not till you have sung the songs of victory.

Rise.

This debate is no debate; it is the sentence of our perdition or salvation,
 Even the air with tremulous bosom pants, for life itself trembles
 in the balance;
 Whether Autumn shall linger or Spring shall come, the judgment
 is in your hands.

The restless lightning knows no peace, the drifting dew is intrusque!
 Sometimes the buds are shaken with passion, sometimes the flowers
 glow with anger,
 In these envious quarrels of the buds and flowers, the garden has
 turned into a hell!
 Not till you have taken counsel how each may make beautiful his
 own heaven,
 Rise.

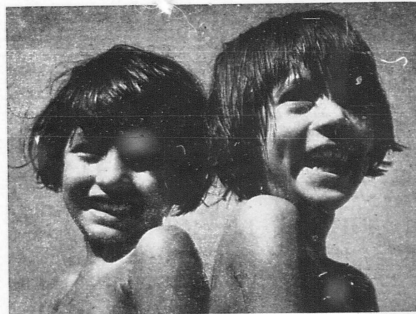
In temples elicits the hoarded treasures of colour and light are
 being despoiled;
 By evil-doers the flower-birds is despoiled of her proud innocence;
 Among the thorns the suns of all beauty is despoiled.
 The breath of growing life is choked, the heart-beats of the garden
 are snubbing,
 Plants supple, flowerets parched, faces pallid, life at the last
 extremity.

From the day when half the singing-birds were caged,
 Autumn has held sway over the garden.
 In the name of this vanished garden—
 Not till you have shaken the gates of captivity,
 Rise.

Today the living world stares with changed eyes, bright with
 revolution;
 From the horizon rays of light float, shedding the la'ire of triumph,
 A new dawn is seeking entrance into the drowsy Hall of Dreams.

How long, this too much darkness? How long, this tide of despair?
 How long shall this dead rate of enmity and languor be licensed
 to survive?
 How long shall Indians lie in bonds? How long shall India be a
 slave?
 —Only when you have struggled till the noose slips down from
 throat to foot,
 Rise!

[We offer the above poem by Kaifi (original in Urdu) as our
 Dussehra greetings to Gandhiji and Mr. Jinnah.—Editor.]



Photos
by Sunil Janah

Bengali children smiled thus—before the famine.



Grand Sikh Misans—they make Punjab, India's granary.

Figure 11.4 “Our Great People”—an ethnographic collage of Sunil Janah’s photographs on the front cover of the *People’s War* (September 24, 1944), to accompany an early poem by Kaifi Azmi (1919–2002). Courtesy of the Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania.

Notes

- 1 Besides the texts mentioned above, see also Giles Scott-Smith (2002), David Caute (2003), Hugh Wilford (2008), Greg Barnhisel (2015), and Joel Whitney (2016). This is not an exhaustive list, and not every book listed here limits itself to the archives of the C.C.F.
- 2 For more on the activities of the C.C.F in India, see Margery Sabin (2002), Eric D. Pullin (2011), and Laetitia Zecchini (2020). While there has been increased interest in the activities of the Indian C.C.F in recent years, scholars are yet to explore its impact on languages other than English. Non-anglophone writers associated with the Indian C.C.F included figures as important as Sachchidananda Vatsyayan (the doyen of modernism in Hindi), Prabhakar 'Bhau' Padhye (major Marathi writer of the post-1960s period, and a key figure behind the growth of the 'new novel' in Marathi) and Buddhadeb Bose (pre-eminent Bengali modernist of the post-Tagore period). The full story of the C.C.F in India remains to be told, but that would be the subject of another essay!
- 3 The best tour d'horizon of the role of censorship in late colonial India remains Gerald Barrier (1974). The communists had their own share of victories in this cloak-and-dagger world. Two of the most successful 'Bolshevik agents' to smuggle Comintern propaganda into India have written fascinating memoirs of the interwar period: Dada Amir Haider Khan (2007) and Michael Caritt (1985).
- 4 For a critique of the upper-caste biases of the CPI leadership, see the recently translated memoirs of R.B More (2019).

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12 The Vatic Bargain: *Solidarity* and the Futures of the Philippine Cold War

Emily Foister

An English-language Philippine journal for current affairs, ideas and the arts that ran from 1966 to 1996, *Solidarity* spoke to the afterlives of the 1955 Bandung Conference's rallying call for self-determination at the same time as hesitantly weighing up possible paths for future development, viz. the United States' capitalist model of modernization theory versus Soviet communism. While the conference saw optimistic new promises made in favor of horizontal collaboration and transcultural solidarity across postcolonial nations, a collective endeavor to exorcise the spirit of imperialism was equally pertinent to the ambitions of the its participants (Figure 12.1).

The impetus to exorcism was often compromised when the most easily accessible paths to industrialization and trade were apparently contingent upon support from former colonial powers. Neil Lazarus has observed that the financial loans given to new states staged what would become "the poverty and, indeed, ever-deepening immiseration and indebtedness of so many postcolonial nations [as] a structural feature of the terms of their insertion into the global economy" (2004, 20). Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, Odd Arne Westad writes that the late colonial regimes' "extensive experiments in social engineering" shared many traits with "the revolutionary regimes that were to succeed them" (2005, 79).

Heonik Kwon, however, refuses the dismissal inherent in focusing on the emulatory characteristics in the practices of emerging nations: it is an inadequate framework for understanding "the momentous shift in global power relations" during the era. Conceptualizing this transitional period as one of continuity denies the postcolonial resistance to former oppressive influence the status of an "authentic creative act" (2014, 74–75). Particularly in the context of the 1960s, it is important to recognize a moment where there was, for many developing nations, "the possibility of an independent orientation toward development" (Coundouriotis, 2).

With these conflicting historiographical narratives still competing for consensus, how should we approach establishing what the attempt to "exorcise" really looked like in 1966, especially as the intellectuals of the Global South then chose to understand its nuances? In recovering and

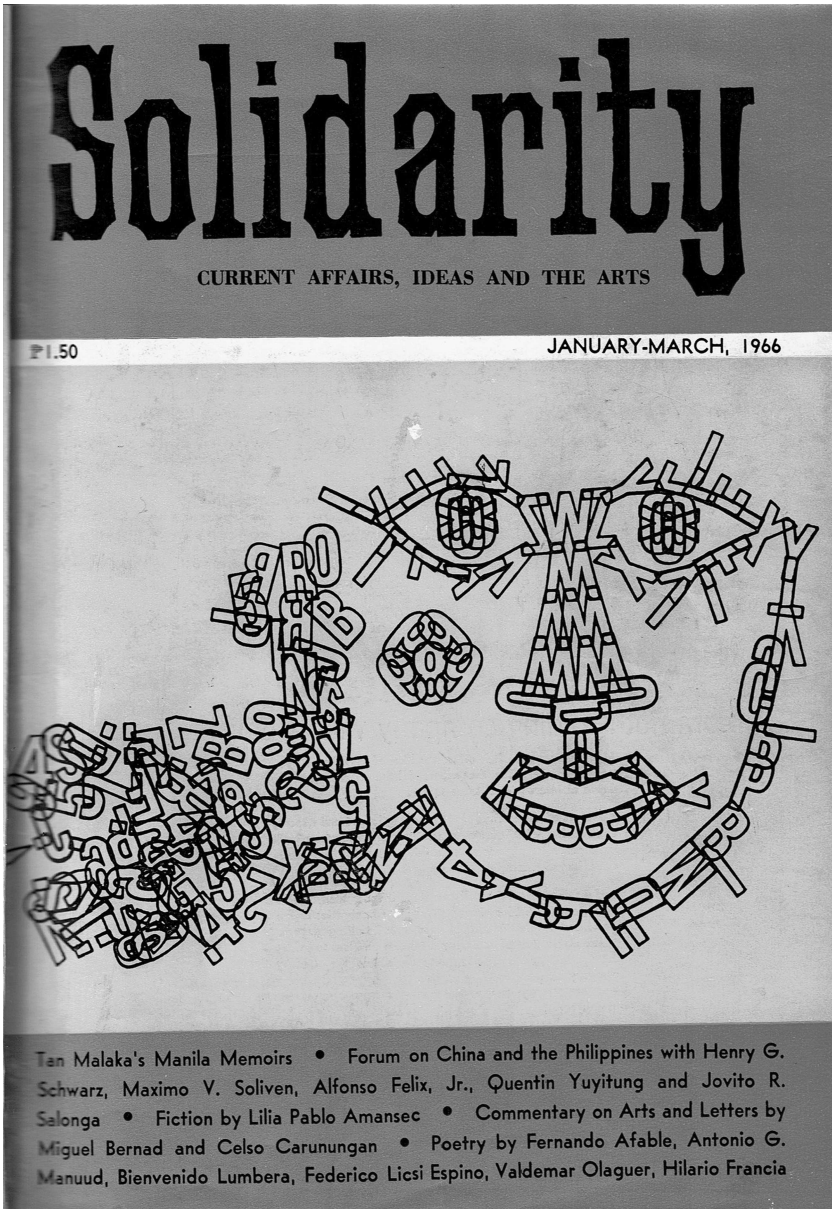


Figure 12.1 The front cover of the inaugural edition of *Solidarity*, January-March 1966. Cover design by Danny Dalena.

reclaiming past creativity, is it possible to recalibrate a revisionist discourse where the trope of emulation takes precedence, learning instead to acknowledge the coexistence and, sometimes, co-optation of the contradictory impulses to maintain and disrupt known histories?

Solidarity might seem to fall on one political side. The Philippines functioned as a vital strategic and symbolic foothold for the United States in the fight against the spread of the USSR's ideological influence in the region. The Filipino intelligentsia that constituted *Solidarity's* main readership were, accordingly, sufficiently important to be worth winning over. Until 1971 the journal received funding through the CIA's front organization, the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) and its successor, the International Association for Cultural Freedom (IACF), both intended to generate approval for the American cause across the globe.¹ This chapter will focus on how *Solidarity's* first edition²—published under the editorial leadership of F. Sionil José—articulated the national project as imagined by the country's intellectuals.

As the Philippines sought to gain acknowledgement as a modern nation, its intellectuals evaluated the implications of alternative modes of development, negotiating the socio-political tensions specific to the Cold War world of the mid-1960s along with the complexities familiar to former colonies. Ultimately, by 1966, the country was already following the American model, a theory of modernization that “expressed the idea that societies passed through linear stages of growth that would end in a modernity that resembled the United States: a political democracy and a capitalist market economy” (Iber 2015, 175). For all its promises, this direction was a process rather than a result. An open-ended series of questions had to be asked, complications had to be dealt with, and situations had to be re-evaluated over time: its end-goal of modernity signified different things to different people. This chapter will explore how the journal's local preoccupations map onto a wider tradition of post-colonial intellectual discourse during this period, as thinkers of the Global South struggled to navigate their positions vis-à-vis United States support.³

I propose that the inaugural issue of *Solidarity* is a space where the contest between the emulation and creativity in postcolonial state-building, as set out by Kwon, highlights familiar compromises between pragmatism and optimism. Debates about what a successful future meant, and how it should be secured, play out across the journal. By dismantling and scrutinizing the magazine's various sections, the chapter unpacks the significance of the different ways in which *Solidarity's* contributors imagined the Philippines' journey towards domestic modernization and political recognition on a global stage. The chapter deconstructs and then reassembles these texts and paratexts in order to parse what was at the stake for a postcolonial state in the choice of a developmental model, particularly as that model worked with or against existing and emerging definitions of national identity. For my purposes I

have chosen the journal's back-cover advertisement for Pan Am, F. Sionil José's editorial, Celso Al. Carunungan's "The Idle State of the Filipino Novelist," and E.P. Patanñe's "The Filipino Image."

From Bandung to Pan Am: Promises of Modernization

Over ten years prior to the publication of the inaugural edition of *Solidarity*, the future posited by Bandung was hopeful if uncertain, and the conference's atmosphere of anticipation evolved into an expectative sentiment that persisted in the dreams of a generation. Christopher J. Lee has spoken of community building across Africa and Asia in the post-World War II years as the writing of a new world order, and Bandung as the moment's synecdoche. While different vantage points presented at the conference gave alternative "storied outcomes," common to most was a positive vision of the future that extended to a creative remodeling of the legacies of the past, in turn coloring how the present moment was read (Lee 2010, 3, 9, 19). The conference was a site of enormous potential change, but its contradictions narrowed the field of possibility in the years to come.

The unclear split between one regime and the next—as Westad notes—was something Carlos Peña Romulo had already warned of as the Philippines' emissary for Bandung. Romulo used his speech to warn the participants to be wary of "the struggle for national independence [becoming] the struggle to substitute a local oligarchy for the foreign oligarchy." He reminded his audience "that autocratic rule, control of the press, and the police state are exactly the worst features of the same colonialist systems against which so many of us are still fighting. Is this really the model of freedom we seek?" (Holland 1955, 14). It is important to recognize that these insights were articulated by a diplomat who was also a successful author and journalist in his own right: Romulo was finely attuned to the power of words in shaping the hopes of emerging nations.

Romulo's speech also stressed the persistence of United States' colonialism in the Philippines. The 1946 Treaty of Manila had ratified the Philippines' independence from American rule. The vestiges of imperialism, nonetheless, were written into the structure of the newly autonomous state's government, which took the United States Constitution as its model. The United States maintained its Philippine military bases after the Second World War and continued to use its political sway to serve its own interests; furthermore, in a bid to seize the capital back from the Japanese, United States artillery had decimated the old city of Manila. This infrastructural trauma was never rectified, even though only Warsaw among Allied capitals had a claim to worse damage during the Second World War (Apostol 2017, xii).

The costs entailed by the wartime destruction of the Philippines meant that its government's ambitions to develop its own substantial military

were no longer fiscally viable. Alliance with the United States became paramount to the country's bid to protect itself from foreign aggression, and the desire to maintain United States military bases throughout the archipelago for security purposes was, as a result, mutual (José 2012, 29). The Philippines' status as a U.S. colony had brought it into World War II, and its structural devastation assured continued dependence.

The Philippines holds a special status as the only former United States colony in Asia. America insinuated itself into the country on the pretext of liberating it from Spanish colonial rule in 1898, but swiftly established a mode of colonial governance little different to that of the former Spanish occupiers (Quibuyen 2008, 263). One of the paratexts of *Solidarity* is telling: a back-cover advertisement for Pan American Airlines—Pan Am—at that time the most successful United States airline and de facto flag carrier abroad. It boasts of being “one of a kind,” “the very best there is,” and the “World's most experienced airline” in much the same language used by the United States in seeking to promote itself as the best way forward for new and decolonizing nations (Figure 12.2).

Horizontal job transfers between the state office and Pan Am were not unusual, as the United States foreign diplomacy project writ large and the expansion of United States business interests via the trade opportunities bolstered by the airline's services were, perhaps inevitably, part and parcel of the same project (Roorda 1998, 34). Furthermore, the conflation between Pan Am's status as a civilian airline operator and as a branch of the United States military had endured since its beginning. It was Juan Terry Trippe, a World War I United States Air Force veteran, who oversaw the company's incorporation in 1927. The first routes it established tell a story of the United States' evolving foreign interests: its maiden passenger service connected Florida and Cuba, and by 1936 it had chartered the first transpacific flights between San Francisco and Manila.

The tight relationship between the United States government and the airline meant that Pan Am's growing presence across the developing world operated as a loudhailer signaling the embrace of the American brand of modernization theory; it served as testimony to the economic progress the United States could deliver in a—superficially at least—mutually beneficial manner (Roorda 1998, 209, 220). The airline reached its commercial apex in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, an ascent on the global stage concomitant with that of the United States itself. The implementation of the Marshall Plan saw the United States newly minted as the patriarchal emblem of capitalist internationalism, and Pan Am hung onto the coattails of its home country's success, swiftly taking its place as the leading international air carrier and capitalizing on the United States' symbolic prestige.

Despite the pomp of the advertisement, however, by 1966 when the edition of *Solidarity* was published, Pan Am was at the beginning of its



**The jet is fairly common.
The airline is one of a kind.**

There's more to running an airline than having a fleet of the finest aircraft. And there's more to *choosing* an airline than comparing timetables or menus.

What you want more than anything else is confidence, peace of mind, assurance. Call it what you will, it means everything.

Come fly with us soon. Wherever you go, you'll know you're flying the very best there is. It's a good feeling.

World's most experienced airline

First on the Atlantic
First on the Pacific

First in Latin America
First 'Round the World

Figure 12.2 One of the paratexts of *Solidarity*: a back-cover advertisement for Pan American Airlines—Pan Am—at that time the most successful United States airline and de facto flag carrier abroad.

period of decline. Attempts to stimulate growth by expanding route networks through the purchase of smaller airlines were ineffective, and by the mid-1980s Pan Am was forced to begin auctioning off some of its most lucrative geographical strongholds in order to stay afloat. The year Pan Am eventually filed for bankruptcy was 1991, the same year as the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the oft-cited end of the Cold War.

Philippine Nationalisms

In his first *Solidarity* editorial, “The Progressive View: The Nationalist Sell-Out,” F. Sionil José put forward the idea that in the case of the Philippines, working for independence from the United States had become an “ideology” that garnered bipartisan support and conveniently resolved internal rifts. As an archipelagic country, the Philippines is made up of 7,641 islands and even today over one hundred languages are still in use: unification is no small feat (Rafael 2017, xvi-xvii). José believed that the “common man”—whoever that was supposed to signify in such a diverse context—did, indeed, participate in the political system, although,

when national policies are formulated or decisions are made, his interests are forgotten for he has no voice in the higher councils. Almost two decades of independence have borne out this fact; both parties are instruments of the vested few. There was a time, of course, when both parties had an ideology, when both worked for independence from the United States; *that* was the ideology. But with this independence achieved, the props have been removed. (1966, 2)

Here José identifies an anti-imperialist solidarity that had left a vacuum with the removal of the colonizer: “In the absence of an ideology, political leaders have swung from one party to another with impunity. There is no stigma attached to this political infidelity” (José 1966, 2). José’s editorial goes on to further attack the endemic corruption of the Filipino administration, disabusing his readership’s understanding of United States presence in the country as anything but a self-interested endeavor. If Romulo used his Bandung speech to warn of the danger of “the struggle for national independence [becoming] the struggle to substitute a local oligarchy for the foreign oligarchy,” José was sensitive to the ways in which the Philippine national imaginary could be rewritten and re-framed in ways to suit the purposes of the Filipino elites and warns of an imminent communist-style revolution in class consciousness if the Filipino people are unable to create a newly cogent national ideology of their own:

Since there is no class distinction between the leaders, whoever wins is actually of no importance. *The winner will always pander to the*

interests of his group, to the dictates of the wealthy—Filipino and foreigner—who contributed to his campaign... Without class ideology and the dedication which such an ideology generates, it is not only easy for politicians to go from one party to another; it is also easy for them to be corrupt. They are not beholden to the people who, in the first place, they do not represent... And if a government is corrupt and therefore unjust, it is easy for people to be disloyal to that government and to support any movement no matter how treacherous the alternative may be. Those who have lost faith in democratic institutions will not hesitate to clutch at straws. They will welcome anything, even communism, if it means change... (José 1966, 2; emphasis mine)

...we should [not] be at the mercy of the American military; we do not owe them anything knowing as we do that they would pull up their stakes the moment these bases are no longer necessary or are obsolete in the light of American strategic requirements. ... they are [not] in Angeles and Subic for the benefit of Pampango tenants, but for the ultimate good of the United States and incidentally, us.

(José 1966, 113)

In spite this admonition, José's profile suggests a natural sympathy for the American cause. When he became publisher and editor of *Solidarity*, he was already an acclaimed English language author in his own right and had founded the Philippine branch of PEN, a Western-oriented organization also financially endorsed by the CCF. When José's editorial asks if "self-respect is more important than dollar-aid" (José 1966, 113), echoing Romulo's *realpolitik* at the Bandung conference, the writer is thinking through a question of importance to his own conflicting loyalties. His answer is double: he concedes that the Philippines cannot call itself independent while American military bases remain in the country, but he believes that "American presence not only in the Philippines but in the whole of Asia will provide us with the stability with which we can develop ourselves" (José 1966, 113). His line here endorses the United States' continued policy of corporate paternalism in the country, while also diverting attention to the goal of reclaiming Filipino nationalism from the Filipino industrialists who "mouth nationalist slogans" to gain justification for the exploitation of their workers (José 1966, 112).

He complains that nationalism "no longer concerns itself with the landless, the high cost of living, the educated unemployed... [It] is only concerned with such high and ghostly matters like folk-dancing, the Filipinization of Western ideas, the changing of street signs, the recital of past achievements" (José 1966, 114). The Philippine elites pay lip service to a genre of nationalism which is deliberately superficial, engaging with

it only at the level of the symbolic. Like Frantz Fanon in the famous essay “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness,”⁴ José makes clear that the turn to the rhetoric of nationalism only cloaks their own self-interest:

Now every politician or government hierarch proclaims himself a nationalist. And when nationalism had been given respectability, it was denuded of its social emphasis... it no longer means freedom for the working class or the flowering of a Filipino culture unsullied by the obnoxious clichés of the cold war. Nationalism has been betrayed by the nationalists themselves... because they did not see beyond their petty, personal desires and failed to identify themselves with the masses.
(José 1966, 114)

National tradition, to his mind, is a distraction from bringing about the policies that will ensure the Philippines’ future political and social progress; policies which he felt necessitated transnational alliances with the superpowers.

Writing the Philippine Imaginary

José’s argument touches upon what Lee sees as the importance of “re-examin[ing] the events and features of decolonization in order to restore *the competing strategies and complex visions* that not only sought to achieve future outcomes, but at the same time *sought to inventively reshape the legacies of the past to serve such present endeavors*” (2010, 9; my emphasis). In the same vein, Caroline Hau writes that for anticolonialist nationalist literature “Not only is history a matter of representation, of how to write and construct the country’s past; history is also a matter of action, of making that history and constructing the country’s future” (2000, 8). This speaks more broadly to the role of literature in nation building, and particularly to how that dynamic has operated in the Philippines.

Hau writes of a “‘haunting’ of Philippine literature by Philippine history” (2000, 11). Similar to the figure of the engineer across the Global South, who as a technocratic authority represented both what the future could look like and a practical means of arriving there, “the relationship between literature and Philippine nationalism was cemented through the paradoxical notion that literary works both embodied culture and helped create that culture” (2000, 3). She writes of the nation as “a concrete embodiment of the will to self-determination and of the self-determining subject,” a dream often conceived of as the “theoretical and practical problem of ‘culture.’” Furthermore, literature’s “special, mediatory status” can be traced back to the European Enlightenment, when culture was formally separated from “religious, economic, and political spheres” and instead endowed with a “specific function in relation to human development and came to be viewed as a means of bridging the gap between the subject as she now stands and

what that subject can become” (Hau 2000, 25). Literature, then, operates as progress incarnate.

José’s bold pragmatism, his “fond hope of *Solidarity* to be, even in a feeble fashion, a vehicle of protest against those well-entrenched individuals and institutions—foreign as well as Filipino—who continue to strangle this nation” (José 1966, 1), the belief in the necessity “to hinder all steps backward, to applaud and accept all liberal ideas, and to defend progress” (José 1966, 114), demonstrates his commitment to the redemptive possibilities of narrative. In the very first line of his editorial, he equates the “birth of the magazine” with *La Solidaridad*, “the newspaper which was the rallying point of the Propaganda Movement against Spain” in the late nineteenth century (José 1966, 1). *La Solidaridad* was founded by “the intellectuals of the Filipino colony,” and José is keen to emphasize their political instrumentality:

Let us not miss what they have done: they made Filipinos conscious of their nationhood; they gave vision to Filipino aspirations which led to the revolution of 1896. They were participants—not dilettantes—in the Filipino cause.

(José 1966, 1)

These intellectuals, and the newspaper they produced, were primary actors in describing, activating and unifying a Philippine national imaginary with broad enough appeal to set the stage for revolution. Far from giving abstract commentary from their ivory tower to a select audience, these intellectuals sought to and succeeded in articulating and disseminating radical ideas among the Philippine public that were sufficiently compelling to instigate an insurgency, which they achieved largely, at least to José’s mind, by means of their printed writing.

Thinking about issues pertinent to his own contemporary Philippines, José touched on bringing together the archipelago through a shared history of oppression and a bid for independence from the United States. More recently, contemporary theorist Gina Apostol has taken this further, identifying in the country’s geography as much as in its histories of colonization a fundamentally urgent need for literature:

For the Philippines, an archipelago geographically fragmented, linguistically fissured, occupied by not one but two invaders heralding a fierce but frayed republic dominated by the oligarchic spoils of our split, postcolonial selves—in a land tectonically and climatically doomed to dissolution—for the Philippines, perhaps it is only through its fictions that it can conceive itself as a unity. (2017: ix)

In Celso Al. Carunungan’s piece in *Solidarity*, “The Idle State of the Filipino Novelist,” we find José’s ideas and investment in the role of the

writer as a primary vehicle to achieving national harmony and international recognition re-surface. He asserts that the “test of a nation’s literature is if it can be recognized in the company of other national literatures” (1966, 66), akin to the developing world’s efforts to be recognized, especially after Bandung, as equal players on the global political stage. As Vicente Rafael has explained, however, this remains a tricky situation for many Anglophone Filipino writers. Feeling themselves distinguished from the vernacular literary tradition because they “epitomized the modernizing promise of colonial rule: the promise of eventual independence and cosmopolitan uplift,” they have been “dramatically provincialized” through their largely Filipino readership: despite working in a world language, their audience fails to move outside their own borders (Rafael 2017, xix–xxi). Carunungan cites Joseph Conrad as the paradigm for what Philippine authors should be seeking to achieve with their work, a testament to the beauty of literature that can be produced by a writer without a native context for the English language (1966, 67)

In his piece for *Solidarity*, Carunungan writes that the Filipino novel in English is much discussed even though “it is not being written” (1966, 65). As a Filipino novelist who writes in English himself, he suggests that his contemporaries have no problem producing what he terms “firecracker literature,” by which he means shorter-form work: stories, poems, and plays (1966, 65–66). He speaks disparagingly of the preference for these shorter forms, as they supposedly betray the Filipino writer’s childish idleness and inability to sustain attention. Such writers can work “afire with a single burst” or “in fury for a few minutes” but are then unreceptive to “editorial discernment” and do “not even bother to rewrite the piece” (1966, 66). Additionally, he mocks their “amusing [ly]” florid use of English vocabulary and the derivative nature of their stylistic idiom, clumsily mixing modes from different British and American authors in a jarring way that reveals their ignorance of the nuances of Western literature (1966, 67). “If we want our literature to mature,” he writes, “to achieve universal stature, our writers must write sustained, substantial pieces” (1966, 66).

For Carunungan, Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* should be the Philippine writer’s prototype: “A nation’s body of literature, in the long run, is... judged... by the epic masterpieces of poetic power” (1966, 66). This finds parallels in Romulo’s Bandung speech, where he goes further than to simply adhere to the perspective that the Third World must accept a child-like relation to its pseudo-avuncular benefactors in the developed world, instead recasting decolonization as a struggle for national masculine assertion. Colonialism “has made the goal of regaining a status of simple manhood the be-all and end-all of a lifetime of devoted struggle and sacrifice” (Holland 1955, 15). Appropriately enough, Carunungan’s own first novel was titled *Like a Big Brave Man* (1960),

suggesting an enduring sense of emasculation as a remnant of colonial oppression.

Carunungan betrays complicity with the perspective portrayed in the Pan Am advertisement. Pan Am boasts about its superlative service in terms that suggest a broader understanding of the superiority to be found in the American way of life. This is a way of life that the company is packaging to be marketed to an aspirational population with a different geopolitical and cultural heritage, a population with its own particular difficulties and advantages, where the U.S. model when applied is unlikely to operate on the same terms or with the same results. If, in more recent years, Area-studies scholars have pursued projects “designed to recover a space of agency, history, and social knowledge beyond Western influence” (Lee 2010, 21), then it is easy to read Carunungan’s criticism as characteristic of the time before such scholarship existed, when the promises of Pan Am not only still rang true but dominated cultural and development discourses in the Global South.

If the novel has been understood, in its most conventional incarnation, to be a Western form (Abrams 1999, 190–6; Cuddon 1991, 599–641), his invocation of novelists of the Western canon—William Faulkner, D.H. Lawrence, and J.D. Salinger among them—shows his credulity in the superiority myth, even as he simultaneously calls upon Filipino writers to focus on developing a style that accurately conveys “genuine Filipino feeling” (1966, 67). For Carunungan, “the ultimate picture of a culture, of a people, can be drawn only on such as canvas as broad and overpowering as an epic poem or novel” (1966, 66). He criticizes Philippine author and Bandung emissary Romulo for seeking success with a novel—*The United* (1951)—which is not only entirely set abroad but where the only Filipino character is a driver (1966, 66.).

Carunungan speaks to one key facet of the postcolonial condition: the need always to compare oneself to the West. Even in the context of the most conscious resistance against it, colonialism’s durability as a way of reading the world testifies to its efficacy as a mode of domination.

Scripts for the Philippine Character

Carunungan’s impatience with his national literature’s inability to meet Westernized standards betrays an essentializing impulse. It is important to ask who, precisely, any imagined national identity, literary or otherwise, belongs to, when that imagination itself is heterogeneous (Lee 2010, 24). Such is the danger, then, of the conceit of E.P. Patanñe’s piece in *Solidarity*, “The Filipino Image.” The article begins with three descriptions of the Filipino’s “basic personality structure,” one from a foreign observer (from the U.S. edition of *Town & Country*) followed by two from Filipino social scientists (Patanñe 1966, 11). The two Filipino perspectives are the most damning: one applauds the Filipino capacity

for “assimilation” which has meant that they have successfully managed “to absorb into their life and ‘Philippinize’ the more desirable aspects of their ruling masters”; the second describes being “dependent,” “oriented to authoritarian ways of thinking” and “submissive” as inherent national traits (1966, 11).

Patanñe does not dismiss these ostensibly reductive perspectives off the bat but instead uses his piece to elaborate on them. The best future for the Filipino people is to accept “the Western view of life—a view that is objective and less emotional, pragmatic rather than impressionistic, scientific rather than fatalistic” (1966, 14). He equates poverty with illiteracy, and illiteracy with “apathy” and “aggression” (1966, 12). Echoing José’s diagnosis of the need to “break through the hard crust of tradition and apathy” (1966, 112) in order to move forward as a nation, Patanñe similarly identifies the continuation of folk tradition as an obstacle to successfully fostering a new Philippine nationalism: “The emerging ‘new Filipino’—whom some social scientists feel would provide a new direction for us—is swallowed up by the social order. He loses his voice and finally reinforces the old folk-feudal social organization, be it in politics, in business or in industry” (1966, 14). For Patanñe, urbanization is the solution, as the decisive and inexorable victory of the “superior culture” over the “inferior” (1966, 14). This follows the logic that accompanies Pan Am’s claim to be “the very best there is,” but is somewhat contrary to José’s call for the new Philippine national ideology to be developed out of “labor unions and farm organizations” (113). Patanñe makes a developmentalist call for modernity, or at least modernization: for him, “folk” refers to a more traditional way of doing industry or going about political economy, where for José, “folk” operates as a kind of nationalist window-dressing.

Patanñe’s words are indicative of the deeply entrenched colonialist propaganda that the CCF sought to disseminate. As Westad has explained, the imperialist project was premised upon a claim to racial superiority that was intended to encourage colonial subjects “to see themselves as having less value than their superiors and to believe that their indigenous cultures were doomed to extinction” (2005, 74). Furthermore, the colonizer’s “possessions, both material and territorial—showed their supremacy” and the colonized “were subjected to relentless propaganda—often through Christian missions—about the justness of the new order and the bankruptcy of their own ideals and beliefs” (2005, 74). Patanñe fails to acknowledge the stickiness of making blanket statements about the traits of a population that Hau has described as so “linguistically and socially heterogeneous... [that] the question of who is speaking or writing, and for whom, is both unavoidable and necessary” (2000, 271–272).

Patanñe’s class prejudices illustrate what Dipesh Chakrabarty has identified as the double understanding of the leaders of emergent nations, for whom peasants and workers “were *already* full citizens—in that they

had the associated rights—but also... people who were not quite full citizens in that they needed to be educated in the habits and manners of citizens” (2010, 53). Bandung’s legacy is colored by a demand for autonomy, expressed as a vociferous rejection of neo-imperialism, while remaining complicit in a Western notion of development: the future was imagined in terms still tangled up in the past. Developmentalism was a remnant of colonialism itself, and yet it remained a priority among decolonizing nations, the consequence of which was “a cultural style of politics” that Chakrabarty calls “*pedagogical*” (2010, 46). This mode “re-enacted civilizational or cultural hierarchies: between nations, between classes, or between the leaders and the masses. Those lower down in the hierarchy were supposed to learn from those higher up. Leaders, when they spoke in this mode, were like teachers” (2010, 46). A strict hierarchy comparable to that of the colonists was, as such, maintained into the postcolonial era.

Chakrabarty in this way aligns himself with Hau, who sees Bandung as the “national bourgeois project of our time.” It had written into it a requirement that a “hegemonic bourgeois class gain control, through its state” of labor force reproduction, local agricultural development, natural resources, local markets, technologies for the development of productive forces and also, fundamentally, “financial circuits, making it possible to centralize surplus and put it to productive use” (Hau 2000, 276). The sense here is that progress must be ensured by state supervision, and progress is defined as maximizing efficiency and productivity through centralization, a methodology superficially contiguous with that of communism. Hau notes that the Filipino bourgeoisie, like that of other Third World nations, “agreed to carry out [post-World War Two] development along the lines of compradorized subordination that the expansion of transnational capitalism has imposed on it” (2000, 276–277). The statist mode of production implemented during the transition to independence “did not automatically imply [the] classless society” (2000, 277) that communism promised.

Vijay Prashad, writing about the aftermath of the perceived failures of the Third World and Bandung’s grand world-making project, suggests that the unity mobilized by developing nations in their fight against imperialism also operated as an “in-built flaw.” The “unity among various political parties and across social classes” ensured the rise to power of “popular social movements and political formations” that then became a “liability” when the presumed socialist program of each new nation became corrupted (2007, xvii). This “discordant unity” was maintained in many places, including a post-Sukarno Indonesia, by the domestication, outlawing, or massacre of the communists (2007, xviii). Under Suharto, a massacre of alleged communist sympathizers in 1965–56 was conducted through a combination of hired assassins and the use of Pancasila Youth, a paramilitary organization, a genocide

largely disregarded until the twenty-first century. This was symptomatic of the collapse of the political platform for Third World solidarity created by Bandung over the 1960s (2007, 162). In the place of progressive collectivism, cynical and cruel “forms of cultural nationalism” emerged and became manifested in renewed fixations on race, class power, and religious fundamentalism (2007, xviii, 163).

In the case of the Philippines, by the time the first edition of *Solidarity* had been published kleptocrat Ferdinand Marcos had recently been elected President, a fact that José considers briefly in his editorial: at a moment when “unemployment and the cost of living had soared... Marcos won because he personified change” (1966, 2, 112). Perhaps what was insufficiently acknowledged in the first instance, however, is that this moment transnational solidarity across the Global South took its first steps with a false choice: as Patrick Iber writes, paraphrasing the argument of Cuban poet Roberto Fernández Retamar, “the meaningful distinction... was not between underdeveloped and developed countries, but between underdeveloped and ‘underdeveloper’ countries, whose exploitative capitalism created poverty in the periphery” (2015, 176).

Conclusion: The Vatican Bargain, No Zero-Sum Game

José’s intrepid optimism, his “fond hope of *Solidarity* to be, even in a feeble fashion, a vehicle of protest against those well-entrenched individuals and institutions—foreign as well as Filipino—who continue to strangle this nation” (1966, 1), the belief in the necessity “to hinder all steps backward, to applaud and accept all liberal ideas, and to defend progress” (1966, 114), illustrates both the continuing relevance of the Bandung spirit to the Philippines and to the emancipating potential of storytelling. *Solidarity*’s ambivalent perspectives mirror the complexities of Bandung, as a “site generative of intersecting vantage points and their storied outcomes” (Lee 2010, 3). The journal’s tone and choice of subject matter emphasize literature’s special status in the Philippines, where it is “Viewed and taught as a document of—even a catalyst for realizing—the development, and transformation of Philippine society, culture, and nation” (Hau 2000, 271). The imaginatively generative qualities of storytelling carve out a space for the articulation of new futures, futures that incorporate the lost possibilities of the past rather than seeing them as a hindrance.

In the Cold War era, particularly in the postcolonial context, literature and hermeneutics often informed how the struggle for independence was imagined. This “reading” of texts, paratexts and oral accounts alike provided the perspective necessary for national consciousness to become legible, shaping a radical ethos and a practical approach to revolution within local communities, throughout nations, and across borders. Bandung now operates as a leitmotif in current speculations of

alternative histories for the Third World, but it should be acknowledged for its profound role in helping to articulate the themes that would continue to resonate in the textuality of the ideological imaginary and the political ambitions of emerging nations during the Cold War. The ambitious hopes of those new nations should not be dismissed as finished business, as there is always “the before that remains internal in the after” (Watson et al., 2018, 10). Focusing on prematurely defined parameters for successful versus failed outcomes, too, overlooks the experience of decolonization as a movement in itself rather than the obtainment of a straightforward list of objectives, what Anthony Alessandrini has identified as “the radically and necessarily open-ended nature of this struggle” (2014, 217). If we are able to successfully embrace a simultaneity, to remain cognizant of the stakes of past futures, and to hold them alongside our reading of the present, it allows for what Rafael has called a “past-present” that is “thickened with other times from other places,” a space “hospitable to other futures, beginning with the future retelling of the story” (2017, xxxiii). Renegotiating simplistic binaries between failure and success grants access to the lost imaginaries of what was once thought possible, and literature for the Philippines has offered a site of potentiality as well as a site of contest, articulating a melancholy that energizes as it clarifies, jumping forward as it glances back.

Notes

- 1 See Frances Stonor Saunders’ book, *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War*. London: Granta, 1999.
- 2 Solidarity 1.1 (January–March 1966)
- 3 cf. Russell Cobb, especially 235, in his piece “Promoting Literature in the Most Dangerous Area in the World: The Cold War, the Boom, and Mundo Nuevo.” In *Pressing the Fight: Print, Propaganda, and the Cold War*, edited by Greg Barnhisel and Catherine Turner, 231–250. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010.
- 4 Fanon, Frantz. “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness.” In *The Wretched of the Earth*: 119–165. London: Penguin, 1985.

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13 Asia's Refugee City: Hong Kong in the Cold War

Cho-kiu Li

The Cold War, according to Immanuel Wallerstein, is “a narrative that was intended to and is supposed to summarize how we are to understand a geopolitical reality over the period of time running approximately from 1945 to 1991” (2010, 15). In the standard Cold War story, two superpower blocs, representing Soviet-led communism and U.S.-led anti-communism, divided the whole world with their non-military stand-off. However, many countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America rejected the idea that the world was divided into these two superpower spheres; instead, following the Bandung Conference in 1955, many non-aligned nations in these continents saw themselves as a “third world.” Moreover, what occupied Asia was a series of “hot” military conflicts, most notably the Chinese Civil War, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. Thus, “it is probably not very useful to speak of the Cold War in Asia” (Wallerstein 2010, 24). Similarly, Kuan-hsing Chen reminds us that unlike Europe, in Asia, “Chinese communism has not been overthrown, Vietnam has not become Eastern Europe, Korea remains divided and Taiwan is still a garrison state” (2010, 119). To Chen, the decolonization of Asia has been “intercepted, interrupted, and invaded by the cold-war structure” as “right-wing regimes in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan ... formed close alliances with the United States to combat the evil communist enemies” (Chen 2010, 121–123). Chen hopes that by reflecting upon the Cold War structure, a region-wide reconciliation among East Asian nations could be possible.

The recapitulation above is not intended to cast Wallerstein and Chen as representative of the vast range of critical reflection on the Cold War, but to offer two examples of how Asian-based approaches to the Cold War have been conceptualized. Despite questioning the dominant Cold War epistemology that often assumes the Western experience as the key referent, both scholars have framed “Asia” in terms of nation-states, their activities and their connectivities in order to reveal a specific Cold War-ness of the region. However, as Richard Saull reminds us, there were different non-state actors and “fronts” in the Cold War of the global south (2005, 254). As one of the major sites in the global south

(Levander and Mignolo 2011, 3; Grovogui 2011, 176), Asia is formed by different actors and fronts that cannot be thoroughly understood from the perspective of the nation-state.

This essay explores one example of these non-nation-state actors and fronts in Cold War Asia, focusing on the refugees who settled in British Hong Kong after fleeing communist China. If the Cold War has long been studied in terms of conflicts between empires and nations, this essay focuses on a city and its stateless people as a site of contest not only between the Cold War powers but also between different Cold War refugees. Thus, what the term “Cold War” describes here is less a Eurocentric narrative or a pro-U.S. structure, more an affective political and cultural context to the Cold War refugees—their movements and lives were greatly affected by the contestation between communism and anti-communism. This essay argues that the city itself was a site of contest that displays many of the more nuanced dynamics of the Cold War. In what follows, I will first describe how Hong Kong became a refugee city amid Asia’s hot wars as a result of the geopolitical contests between the great powers. I will then focus on different literary representations of the refugees, to give a more micro analysis of different images of refugees in Hong Kong. In this sense, this essay approaches the city as a site of Cold War contest in terms of both geopolitics and cultural politics.

A Cold War Contact Zone

Hong Kong is rarely studied as a part of the global south. The city is better known as a global financial center or, from the perspective of British colonialism and Chinese nationalism, a British colonial city from 1842 until it was handed over to China in 1997. But I would argue that it is reasonable to see the city and a portion of its population as a part of the “global south” during the Cold War. As many scholars have reminded us, the term “global south” refers less to a fixed geographical entity, more an “entity invented” (Levander and Mignolo 2011, 3), a “critical category” (Mahler 2018, 5), or a “symbolic designation” (Grovogui 2011, 175) that reveals subjugated peoples and their interactions with the dominant global imperial powers and their designs. During the Cold War, Hong Kong was pervasively seen as a—if not the—major place of asylum in the region for those who felt threatened or were violently displaced, uprooted, or discharged by contestations between communists and anticommunists in Asia. In 1949, when a communist state was established in China after the end of the Chinese Civil War (1945–1949) between the pro-Soviet Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the pro-U.S. Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT), around 700,000 Chinese refugees fled to Hong Kong in two years, increasing the city’s population to over two million people. In 1950, a shocked British observer described the city as “one vast camp,”

observing that “never in my life, in Africa, in Europe, in Arabia, had I seen slums worse than this” (quoted in Madokoro 2016, 37). In 1956, “one in three residents in Hong Kong counted as a refugee” (Gatrell 2013, 187). From the 1950s to the late 1970s, hundreds of thousands of people escaped through Shenzhen to British Hong Kong, driven out by Socialist China’s radical land reforms (in the early 1950s), its anti-rightist campaign (1957–1959), the great famine (1959–1961), and the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. What should not be forgotten is that in the aftermath of the Vietnam War (1955–1975) and the triumph of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), Hong Kong received around 200,000 Vietnamese refugees between 1975 and 1997 (Chan 2011b, 5). The city had officially become the “first port of asylum” for those fleeing Communist Vietnam after the British Hong Kong government signed an International Convention in Geneva in 1979 (Davis 1991, 211). As Laikwan Pang (2020) has reminded us, Hong Kong was not only a colonial city but also a refugee city. However, Pang’s work, focused on the citizens’ political movements of the 2010s, does not elaborate on how the Cold War context gave rise to such a refugee city.

First of all, because of its geopolitical specificity of being governed by the British amid other Asian sovereign regimes, Hong Kong had a history of accommodating political dissenters and economic migrants from the rest of China and Asia even before the Cold War. British colonialists occupied Hong Kong not to exploit its resources but to use it as a trading center, which, though profit-driven, created a space which was relatively marginal to and free from the political centers of the region. Hung Chuen-fook (a leader of China’s Taiping Rebellion, 1850–1864) and Sun Yat-sen (an opponent of the Qing Empire), the Philippines’ Jose Rizal (who fought Spanish colonialism), and Vietnam’s Ho Chi Minh (who opposed French colonialism) all at one time or another sought refuge in Hong Kong from ruling regimes nearby. During the Cold War, too, Hong Kong’s city status and order should be understood in terms of the above geopolitics that rendered the city an exceptional site because of its colonial status. However, Cold War Hong Kong was very different from its pre-World War Two period, as the city was shaped by a number of powers, not merely British colonialism (Mark 2004; Roberts and Carroll 2016; Share 2007).

From the British perspective, Hong Kong was a colonial city that generated economic profit and thus ought to be “neutral,” removed from any complex Cold War contestations that might irritate China’s newly established communist state. The colonial government was indeed very vulnerable in the face of a strong communist state nearby (Mark 2004). The British adopted a kind of “diplomacy of restraint,” which insisted that the containment of communism had to be as “indirect, discreet, and non-confrontational in nature as possible” (Peterson 2008). To Communist China, Hong Kong should ultimately be returned and reinstated as a part of Chinese national territory, but for now the city was best left in British

hands so that Beijing could benefit both economically and politically, for example, earning foreign currency via the city, stoking tensions between the U.K. and the U.S., and promoting a “less communist” Chinese nationalism to the diasporic ethnic Chinese worldwide.¹ From the U.S. perspective, Hong Kong was a frontier city in its containment strategy, allowing them a glimpse behind the “bamboo curtain” and to propagate anticommunist propaganda to ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia. After the beginning of the Korean War in 1950, the Americans established “the largest American consulate anywhere in the world” in Hong Kong, from which to practice their global containment strategy and psychological operations in Asia (Lombardo 1999, 64). Thus, different political powers found Hong Kong useful in the maintenance and advancement of their own interests in the region. The city was “neutral” in the sense that it could accommodate the coexistence of British colonialism, Chinese communism, and American anti-communism.

We may say that this geopolitical neutrality, which allowed multiple powers to co-exist in the same site, made Hong Kong a Cold War “contact zone” (Pratt 1991), in which colonialism, communism, and anti-communism were “neutralized” at the point at which they met. Yan Lu argued that British Hong Kong was a “Cold War grey zone,” where “certain communist activities were tolerated but rigidly confined by the colonial legal frame” because the Cold War powers “preferred appeasement to confrontation” (2010, 95). She also observed that Hong Kong was a Cold War borderland that was “conditioned by a pragmatism supported by the two major powers that had vested interest in or direct control of the territory” (Lu 2010, 117).² But more importantly, what “contact zone” refers to is not only the pragmatic coexistence of the great powers in Hong Kong but also the role of the city as a gateway to both Communist China and the anticommunist countries. To many Chinese refugees, fleeing to Hong Kong was a means not to get in touch with another culture but an opportunity for them to leave China’s communist regime and to enter anticommunist countries, such as Taiwan under the KMT regime, Western Europe, Australia, and North America.

Historian Laura Madokoro (2016) has offered a thorough study of the people displaced by the Chinese Civil War, highlighting Hong Kong as a key refuge and stopover. Madokoro’s main concern, however, is how racism operated in the management of Cold War refugees, arguing that the term “refugee” was defined by what she calls “white settler societies” that implemented strict migration policies towards Asian refugees and created racist spectacles of refugees (e.g. children rescued by Western humanitarian organizations) to propagate anti-communism. While Madokoro has clearly shown how the Western “imperial eye” saw Asian and Chinese refugees in Hong Kong, the rest of this essay focuses on the specificity of Hong Kong as a site of contest at that time. By examining cultural representations of refugees that were produced, circulated, and

consumed in the city through the analysis of “refugee novels” in Hong Kong literature, we will gain a better understanding of Hong Kong as a refugee city and contact zone amid different political powers and social groups in Cold War Asia.

The Cultural Politics of Refugee Novels

Cultural production, circulation, and consumption in the Cold War contact zone of Hong Kong was conditioned by the self-restraint of Cold War powers. For instance, *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), the famous Cold War film with a plot about a Korean War veteran who was brainwashed by communists to assassinate a U.S. presidential candidate, was banned in Hong Kong by the British colonial government (Ng 2008). The British tried hard to maintain a balance between the cultural propaganda of America and that of China. Besides banning *The Manchurian Candidate*, British censors also banned *The Red Detachment of Women* (1961), a Chinese film about a female slave who fought back against her “owner” and became a communist heroine. In general, the British acted like a cultural regulator who monitored and restrained the propaganda of both Chinese communists and American anticommunists. British Hong Kong served to neutralize oppositional ideologies: Chinese communism, British colonialism, and American anti-communism all limited themselves to the maintenance of a city that could be useful in the Cold War geo-economy and geopolitics.

Nevertheless, the self-restraint of the great powers did not mean that their political propaganda was weak and passive; on the contrary, the Cold War powers adjusted their propaganda strategies according to the specificity of Hong Kong as a contact zone. For example, Beijing required leftist cinema companies in Hong Kong to attract and educate overseas or diasporic Chinese through soft patriotism instead of radical communist propaganda (Zhou 2009, 30). On the other hand, the United States Information Service (USIS) in Hong Kong, aware of the cultural difference between Westerners and the Chinese, relied on writers who had fled mainland China as their local cultural agents to translate American literature into Chinese and create various anticommunist novels and magazines for diasporic Chinese (So 2013; Wang 2015). Here, what is important is that literature is the key cultural medium if we are to understand Hong Kong as a site of contest around the Cold War refugees.

Studies of Hong Kong’s Sinophone literary history often mention “refugee literature,” but the term is not without contestation because the naming itself is political. For example, literary historian Xifang Zhao (2015) argues that most of the Hong Kong refugee novels in that period were “U.S. dollars literature,” i.e., anticommunist propaganda supported by U.S. funding. According to Zhao, those stories consistently attributed refugees’ miserable lives to the dark side of China’s

communist regime, depicting the refugees as stoically tolerating hardship in the pursuit of freedom and looking forward to going to Taiwan or aligning with America (Zhao 2015 76).³ Zhao was aware that the refugee novels were not unanimous, as there were two novels that can be seen as distanced from U.S. values and representing refugees “fairly”: the first one was Ruan Lang 阮朗’s *Sketches of a Mansion* 某公館散記, which depicted those who fled communist China as entrepreneurs and the KMT supporters as lacking any positive ideals, simply wanting to gain advantage from American anti-communist funding. Zhao also praised Cao Juren 曹聚仁’s *Hotel* 酒店 as a “fair” novel that did not demonize communism. The story was about a Paris-educated elite who served as a senior education officer in mainland China before the revolution. After fleeing to Hong Kong, he and his wife endure such a miserable life that he eventually kills himself while his wife became a prostitute. But in general, refugee novels were synonymous with anti-communism.

It is true that the U.S. invested a lot in what Richard Jean So (2013) called “literary information warfare” in Asia, especially in Hong Kong. Many refugee intellectuals were supported by the ostensibly non-governmental agency Aid Refugee Chinese Intellectuals (ARCI, actually funded by the CIA), and some directly or indirectly employed by the USIS (Chao 1997). The CIA set up the Committee for Free Asia (re-named the Asia Foundation in 1954), which funded a Hong Kong-based publication network (Shen 2017).⁴ However, in Zhao’s (2014) analysis, those refugee novels were no more than U.S. propaganda, and the term “refugee novel” was treated as almost entirely equivalent to “anticommunist novel.” I agree with Chi-tak Chan, who argues that categorizing those literary stories as “anticommunist literature” and “U.S. dollar literature” simplifies their specificity and nuances (2011, 9). Chan points out that many “anticommunist” novels were not about the subversion or re-occupation of communist China; instead, those stories often demonstrated a painful tension between the characters’ beliefs and their reality. On the one hand, the characters showed a nationalist loyalty to the values of Republican China (1911–1949), which was defeated in the Chinese Civil War and relocated to Taiwan; on the other hand, those loyalists (or we may call them “anticommunist Chinese nationalists”) tried hard to maintain their values in the face of the very difficult local reality in British Hong Kong. In the early 1950s, around seven thousand KMT loyalists who for various reasons did not go to Taiwan were forced by the British government to move to a poor suburban area of Hong Kong called Tiu Keng Leng, such that the KMT supporters would be separated from the CCP supporters in the city. Chan reminds us that many “refugee novels” were stories of KMT loyalists’ lives in Tiu Keng Leng, not so much about fighting communism.

While Zhao describes the refugee novels as the propaganda of a geopolitical power, Chan reminds us that those novels, despite being funded by the U.S., represented refugees' political memories, beliefs, and struggles. Zhao and Chan help to reveal the two different dimensions of Hong Kong as a Cold War refugee city—on the one hand, its refugee population attracted the attention of the Cold War powers, who fought over the support of the refugees by intervening in the production of culture; on the other hand, through reading the texts as more open-ended than mere propaganda, we can also see the tensions of the refugees' world. But Chan's depiction of the refugee novels has also simplified the representation of refugees. In the below, I offer a close examination of one of the most widely discussed refugee novels, to demonstrate further how Cold War geopolitics and cultural politics operated in Hong Kong as a contact zone and refugee city.

Refugeetude in Cold War Hong Kong

Semi-Lower Society (1955) 半下流社會 is seen as a representative example of Hong Kong's refugee novels by both Zhao and Chan. The author, Tzu-fan Chao 趙茲蕃 (1924-1986), was a Hamburg-born Chinese novelist who fled communist China. Funded by a U.S. propaganda institution, Chao's novel projected a refugee community which was compatible with anti-communism. But I argue that the representation of these refugees is irreducible to anti-communism, because Chao's portrait of this community also revealed the inhumane conditions of the British colony, a skepticism of Chinese anticommunist propaganda and a sense of communitarianism among the refugees. This novel not only helps to reveal the specificity of Hong Kong as a site for contact and asylum-seeking but also the self-representation and cultural agency of refugees in the Cold War. Vinh Nguyen has proposed a theoretical concept called "refugeetude," which describes a coming into consciousness of the forces that produce and structure "refuge" and "refugee," "names the form of recognition, articulation, and relation that emerge from the experience of refuge(e)" and "turns away from already available discourses of victimhood and commonplace knowledge of refugees to highlight how refugee subjects gain awareness, create meaning, and imagine futures" (2019, 110–111). This section explores refugeetude in Cold War Hong Kong through Chao's work, which can serve to illuminate the complexity of the city as a site of contest during the Cold War that cannot be simplified as merely a contest of empires and nations. Chao's refugees are also cultural (literary) subjects in the city.

Semi-Lower Society was undoubtedly a product of U.S. propaganda efforts. Chao was the son of a Chinese migrant in Hamburg and went to his father's fatherland, Hunan, to study mathematics and economics in a university. He later joined the KMT army to fight against the

Japanese army during the Second World War and then fought against the CCP in the Chinese Civil War. After the defeat of the KMT, Chao moved to British Hong Kong and became the chief editor of the U.S.-funded Asia Press in the early 1950s. After its publication, *Semi-Lower Society* was named one of the most popular novels in a KMT-controlled opinion poll in Taiwan in 1955 (Wang 2011). Nevertheless, we should interpret the novel not only as U.S. propaganda; it was also a commodity that would not attract consumers unless it could to some extent meet their cultural needs and desires, especially in a “neutral” market such as Cold War Hong Kong, where consumers had easy access to both communist and anticommunist cultural products.⁵ I will analyze two episodes in *Semi-Lower Society* that reflect refugees’ skepticism toward anti-communism and their belief in a community without the leadership of a party-nation-state.

Semi-Lower Society is a story about how a group of refugee intellectuals—a writer, a poet, and a university lecturer—survive in the commune-like environment of Tiu Keng Leng by forming a collaborative writing company. Their lives are miserable, but they still insist on their ideals and virtues. In one episode they discuss why they ended up as refugees in Hong Kong:

What makes us hungry and stateless refugees is not this place, but the mainland. Who forced us to leave our homeland and families to have this inhuman life? Who enslaved our bodies and souls, forcing us to be stateless people? Who used guns, power, and spies to stop us pursuing freedom and truth? We all know the real reasons behind it. Brothers, please do not forget that we are now standing at the brink of hell, speaking in an anti-totalitarian frontline city.

(Chao 1955, 20–21; my translation)

Obviously, Chao attributed the refugees’ hardship to Chinese communism rather than British colonialism in Hong Kong. But on the other hand, Chao also questions the anticommunist propaganda in the city. In another episode, one of the refugees shares a rumor about brutality in a village in Hubei province under the control of the CCP: the party has condemned a well-respected philanthropist, accusing him of cheating the villagers and exploiting the poor. Horrifyingly, the philanthropist has been forced to have sex with his daughter-in-law in front of all villagers and communist cadres. Another refugee questions the truthfulness of this story, saying that “the CCP is still human no matter what, and it is just not possible for humans to act in that kind of totally unjust way” (Chao 1955, 154; my translation). Another refugee, who is not willing to judge whether this rumor is true or not, explains his feeling from an epistemological perspective that questions the absolutism of ethical judgment. According to this character,

The division of the world began in our brains. For example, a person standing on the other side of Shenzhen River said X is a patriot. But on the other side of the river, the definition of patriotism is totally different. To them, those who love the KMT should die, while to us, those who are loyal to the Communist International should die. What is unethical to us is ethical and progressive to them. The world is divided for this reason.

(Chao 1955, 50; my translation)

On the one hand, we can interpret this questioning of the self's ethical judgment as a critical reflection that was included in the novel only to make the story more appealing to readers expecting a total demonization of the CCP. But on the other hand, we can also read this episode as localization of anticommunist propaganda. *Semi-Lower Society* was not only a propaganda novel but also a commodity that had to compete for its audience with other pro-communist and anticommunist cultural products, and many potential readers were refugees who had access to different sources of information about Communist China. This also reflects the specificity of Hong Kong as a Cold War contact zone that connects both the communist world and anticommunist world. The refugeetude in Chao's novel, thus, was not only anticommunist but also the result of "neutralization" and the restrained nature of Cold War propaganda in Hong Kong. In the city, different contradictory propaganda co-existed with a huge refugee population from neighboring Communist China.

If what the above shows is that the Hong Kong refugees who fled communist China were skeptical of both leftist and rightist propaganda, the term "semi-lower society" points to another ambiguous position that is situated between the upper-class refugees and the lower-class refugees who had no desire to pursue ideals. According to one of the main characters, the term "semi-lower society" best describes their sociality:

Hunger and suffering are not obstacles that divide people, but a chance for people to help, respect, and love each other. Our society is an upward society ... my brothers, fate is like a seesaw: one side up, the other side down. Only love is always balanced. What is the society we are living in? Our society is neither as selfish and cold-blooded as the upper-class society, nor is it a lower-class society with no ideals to pursue at all. Our society is further from the upper-class society and closer to the lower-class society. We are semi-lower society.

(Chao 1955, 18; my translation)

We can understand "semi-lower society" in two senses. On the one hand, this refugeetude—the self-positioning of a refugee community between the "upper-class society" and "lower-class society"—marked distrust of the KMT elites in Hong Kong. Instead of encouraging a more

submissive attitude toward the KMT leadership, Chao projected a refugee community detached from the party-nation-states of both Chinese communism and anti-communism. The novel was hostile to Chinese communism, yet not without skepticism toward anticommunist propaganda and its promise of a liberating nation-state. This stateless communitarianism without party leadership was compatible with the U.S. hidden strategy of developing what was usually called a “third force”—the CIA tried to nurture a group of politicians and intellectuals because they did not believe in the KMT (Jeans 2017). On the other hand, we may also read this communitarian refugeetude that emphasizes mutual collaboration among intellectuals rather than individualism as meeting the need of migrants who found themselves trapped without hope between CCP, KMT, and the Western powers. Chao was not only an employee of an U.S. institution, he himself was a political refugee. This means that the novel was not only a tool of the Cold War powers but also the cultural expression of a Cold War refugee.

Indeed, although Chao was a chief editor of a CIA-funded press, some literary scholars doubt whether it is appropriate to class Chao as an anticommunist novelist because his writings and inter-cultural life experiences were obviously unlike many other KMT-hired or CIA-hired anticommunist authors (Chang 2006; Chou 2006). For example, in 1964, Chao was deported by the British Hong Kong government after he published *The Island of Revival* 重生島 (1964), a long novel that recorded the lives of a group of Chinese criminals isolated on an island by the British colonial government. Chao was arguably both anticommunist and anti-colonial. Furthermore, after he relocated to Taiwan, Chao's position was again marginal among other anticommunist writers: he was never awarded or valued by the KMT government and was never appointed as editor of any state-sponsored literary magazines (Chang 2006). Chao's life of literary production was far richer than the term anti-communism can convey. The restrained and ambiguous tendency of the literary refugeetude of *Semi-Lower Society* can partially be explained in terms of Chao's career path, which rarely aligned completely with one single Cold War ideology. Chao's novel depicts a group of intellectual refugees forming their community for survival, providing us with a glimpse of the literary and intellectual agency of refugees in the Cold War from a less nation-state-centric perspective.

Refugees as the Global South

Using the perspective of stateless refugees in their place of asylum, we may respond to Wallerstein and Chen regarding what the term “Cold War” could mean in Asia. If Wallerstein saw the Cold War as a problematic Eurocentric narrative and Chen saw it as a pro-US political structure, to Hong Kong's refugees, the Cold War was a very real and

highly affective situation in which they were forced to move from one place to another, all the time surrounded by propaganda from different geopolitical forces operating in their stopover location. This is also why I see Hong Kong, as a contact zone and a refugee city, as one of the key nodes in the “global south”—through a close examination of the city, the huge flow of people, or what we may call the “refugee-scape,” can be imagined and further explored. This is a “global south” formed by stateless people moving through the city, or waiting in the city to move on elsewhere.

In the early 1970s, Hong Kong started to undergo rapid urbanization and export-oriented industrialization, which made the city a role model of Chinese modernity and later a global financial center with one of the highest Gini coefficients in the world. The moment when the city was a Cold War refugee city, a part of the global south that encompassed societies without autonomy in the broadest sense, has been largely forgotten. But this aspect of the city is helpful for us to understand its recent political development. In the Hong Kong nationalism emerging since the early 2010s, the escapees from communist countries have been appropriated as the “ancestors” of Hong Kong citizens. For example, the protest slogan “our last generation came to Hong Kong to evade the CCP, please do not hand us back to its devil claws” was widely circulated in different protests. The Hong Kong nationalism in the 21st century might have no direct relation to Chao’s novel and its refugee communitarianism in the early 1950s. But both *Semi-Lower Society* and the nationalist myth revived half a century later mark and contribute to the uniqueness of Hong Kong as a Cold War refugee city, which also sheds light on how a refugee city might evolve. The world is not only divided by two dominant superpowers and other nation-states but also formed by those who are stateless.

Notes

- 1 Under Beijing’s policy, which was called “long term planning, full utilization,” the city provided China about 40% of its foreign exchange earnings in 1965 (Tucker, 1994, 213).
- 2 For instance, the British colonial officials often objected to the covert incitement organized by both the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the KMT (who retreated to Taiwan after 1949), and even had the Voice of America in Cantonese shut down in 1951 (Tucker 1994, 206).
- 3 The American-funded novels, according to Zhao, included Chao 趙之蕃’s *Semi-Lower Society* 半下流社會, Lin Shicun 林適存’s *Ostrich* 駝鳥 and Chang Yifa 張一帆’s *Spring is Coming to Tiu Keng Leng* 春到調景嶺.
- 4 The CCP in Hong Kong, despite maintaining several pro-communist newspapers that included literary supplements, paid little attention to literature as they were more interested in the propaganda power of mass cinema and Cantonese opera (Cheung, 2003, 54–55).
- 5 Literary scholar William Tay remembered that, when he was young, many Hong Kong residents would read both the pro-communist and anti-communist

media, and that pro-communist and anti-communist writers could be good friends while serving two very different campaigns (1995, 168–169). Tay's account shows how literary circulation and consumption operated in the Cold War neutral contact zone of Hong Kong.

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14 Freedom and Development in the Cultural Cold War

Eleni Coundouriotis

The impression of a clear beginning and end for the history of development (roughly 1949 to 1992) coincides almost exactly with the timeline of the Cold War and suggests a neat rise and fall narrative that bears reconsideration. U.S. President Truman's declaration in his inauguration speech on January 20, 1949, that "we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas" launched development as a seemingly all-encompassing paradigm for how North and South should relate (quoted in Rist 2014, 71). After World War II, the global "discourse of war" gave way to the discourse of poverty and the need to ameliorate it (Escobar 2012, 21). Moreover, economics displaced other discourses of knowledge and provided a new legibility that brought the Third World into focus (Escobar 2012, 56).

A touchstone moment for development's new hegemonic status was September 25, 1961, when John F. Kennedy declared the 1960s a United Nations Decade of Development. This was the first of four such decades as the UN repeated its pledge despite the economic shocks of the 1970s and 1980s, which mired the Third World in debt and led to its impoverishment instead of economic progress (Jolly et al. 2009, 105–106). After the Cold War, many economists declared development moribund as a vision shaping global economic policy.¹ Thus, clearing ground for new thinking, "postdevelopment" discarded the "knowledge practices" of development and its overdependence on economic theory (Escobar 2012, xviii).

If we wish to challenge the rise and fall narrative of development as some decolonial theorists have done and push for an expanded timeline linking development to the colonialism that preceded it and to a resurgent humanitarian aid regime that followed it, we need a more nuanced context for the optimism of the 1960s.² For one, the counter-trends to western ideas of development during that decade also reflected optimism. Although the overthrow of Nkrumah in 1968 marked the end of an era when the Soviet Union had invested in socialist development on

the continent, in the early 1960s there had been optimism and engagement. And, more importantly, Africans themselves engaged with development in spheres outside of intense economic modernization whose promises of large-scale development seemed abstract to their daily lives.³ Thus, some of the thinking about development in the cultural sphere in particular escaped the ideological mold of the east-west confrontation.

In the 1960s, the possibility of an independent orientation toward development emerged most palpably in the thinking of South African novelist Bessie Head, who tied it to ideas of human dignity and freedom. Sometimes characterized as a utopian thinker, Head captures the optimism of the decade. And, whereas “theater for development” rather than the novel is the most widely recognized cultural practice linked to development, it gained prominence later in the 1980s. Moreover, “theater for development” was oppositional, adumbrating the postdevelopment critique to come.⁴ Head instead countered the bleakness of her personal circumstance with an optimism stemming from a belief in a political freedom within reach. This outlook had important synergies with an ascendant development discourse. A stateless refugee in Botswana, she lived a precarious existence on the margins of the Cold War (Eilersen 1996, 87–90). Her exile was personal as much as political: escaping a bad marriage, she accepted a job offer to teach in a rural community in Botswana knowing that she would not be able to return to South Africa (Eilersen 1996, 62). But her migration was also a refusal to participate in a liberation politics that marginalized her in South Africa. As “coloured” and a woman, her unbelonging was acute.⁵ By living in exile, she hoped to maintain her beliefs in the ideals of liberation without compromising her subjectivity. She would ride on the wave of optimism on the continent.

In *When Rain Clouds Gather* (originally published in 1968), Head envisions agricultural development in rural Botswana. She places the country in the context of changing social mores around the time of African independence and at a moment of heightened awareness that political freedom was within reach. Head’s work can be placed alongside other optimistic works from the 1960s such as Nuruddin Farah’s *From a Crooked Rib* (1970), written in 1968 while he was a university student in India, and Sembène Ousmane’s *Les bouts de bois de Dieu* (1960), which depicts a successful railroad strike in colonial Senegal. Okot p’Bitek’s epic poem *Song of Lawino* (1972, first published in Acholi in 1966) also hits a confident note. Such works disrupt the overwhelming impression that the 1960s produced only bleak texts, such as the classics of post-colonial disillusion: Ayi Kwei Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s *Grain of Wheat* (1967).

It is sometimes difficult to recreate the horizon of the late 1960s and recover the range of aspirations that were tangible at the time. The economic gains of the decade were real and set a benchmark against which economists have measured the extent of Africa’s subsequent

economic fall (Jolly et al. 2009, 105).⁶ This “progress,” therefore, was not a harbinger of what was to come but a discreet period of growth and modernization that came to an end in the 1970s, creating an exacerbated perception of historical regression in the decades that followed (Ferguson 1999, 236–238). However, not all aspiration fell in line with the east-west ideological conflict of the Cold War and thus not all of it expired on this timeline. Visions of constructive, positive social and economic change had other iterations that did not follow a linear temporality of a progressive modernization but imagined a more independent and improvisational path. Indeed, this kind of independence is Head’s hallmark, as she both embraced the goals of liberation and found herself remaining on the sidelines, ambivalent about how politics played out in practice (Eilersen 1996, 51–52).

Individual subjects’ aspiration to freedom is key to understanding the cultural engagement with development discourse. In the mid to late 1960s, the discourse of freedom had a lot of purchase in South Africa. For those oppressed by apartheid, freedom was believed in as inevitably consequential even if in the short term it seemed elusive (Taoua 2018, 159). How then did the aspiration to freedom reflect ideas of economic development? South African resistance literature typically foregrounds poverty as a highly visible manifestation of black oppression, recording its destructive effects in detail to show the damage done. However, first world countries (and South Africa’s apartheid regime) had a negative tendency to see the struggle for political freedom by Africans as communist plots, thereby imposing an ideological interpretation on the freedom struggle that preempted the possibility of exploring the aspirations for development.

Taking development out of its institutional practices in international organizations and situating it as a site of contest in the cultural Cold War, we can explore other potential approaches. Thus development might appear as a polemic for political freedom and an independent expression of the aspiration to progress not instrumentalized by either superpower. The ideas that shaped Head’s optimism at the end of the 1960s are suggestive on this score, but they need contextualization.

Temporality and Development Discourse

A closer look at the political rhetoric that accompanied development sets apart Head’s thinking. John F. Kennedy launched the decade of development using language in marked continuity with Truman’s. By declaring that “only by helping the least fortunate of its members to help themselves can the human family achieve the decent, satisfying life that is the right of all people” (quoted in Rist 2014, 72), Truman presaged political decolonization as an independence to come that, paradoxically, would be the achievement of others (Rist 2014, 75). He gave

development a “*transitive meaning* (an action performed by one agent upon another),” handicapping the prospect of true sovereignty for the new nations (Rist 2014, 73; emphasis in original). His allusion to the “human family,” moreover, is less descriptive than prescriptive: with development, we become a human family.

Kennedy similarly promoted decolonization and declared the imperative to bring these new nations under the umbrella of the developed, “free” world through economic aid. Ironically, but perhaps not surprisingly given the Cold War context, Kennedy outlined in the same speech key initiatives for nuclear disarmament. As he declared the “decade of development,” he warned famously against extending the arms race into space. Reflecting Cold War ideas, development was the “alternative to war” in a nuclear age (Kennedy quoted in Rist 2014, 89).

South Africa’s particular place in the development schema for Africa has its clearest articulation, however, in Robert F. Kennedy’s “Day of Affirmation” speech, delivered at the University of Cape Town on June 6, 1966—roughly two years after Head left South Africa.⁷ Defending civil and political rights and stating that he is “unalterably opposed to communism” because it puts state interests ahead of individual rights, Kennedy urged young South Africans not to fight communism with “imitat(ing) its dictatorship.” He also acknowledged the United States’ struggle to overcome its own history of racial discrimination and referred to the “human dignity” of all, declaring the “individual” as the “touchstone of value.”

Most emphatically, Kennedy sought to galvanize his youth audience to join an “international” coalition of liberal, progressive subjects committed to individual freedom:

Many nations have set forth their own definitions and declarations of these principles. And there have often been wide and tragic gaps between promise and performance, ideal and reality. Yet the great ideals have constantly recalled us to our duties. And—with painful slowness—we have extended and enlarged *the meaning and the practice of freedom* for all our people. (emphasis added)

By urging his audience to be recalled to duty and not veer away from goals that are attained slowly, Kennedy urged South Africans to get on a progressive course.⁸ He stressed his understanding of “the vagaries of history and of experience” which have shaped South Africa but declared that development is the goal that unites humanity as a whole. South Africa could lead the continent given its developmental head start but would maintain this lead only as a free and tolerant nation. Kennedy, moreover, vouched for African peoples’ commitment to progress in order to motivate South Africans to be more constructive.⁹ The newly independent nations in the rest of the continent “are hoping and gambling their progress and

stability on the chance that we will meet our responsibilities to help them overcome their poverty.” Thus, development becomes “the meaning and the *practice* of freedom,” even as this vision expresses exclusively what the developed world sees as modern and progressive. Although the emphasis on freedom finds a correspondence in Head, she aims directly at the implications of the “transitive meaning” and seeks initiative instead in African subjects. To reformulate the path to freedom, moreover, Head revises the temporality of development.

As an idea, development is seductive especially when it is, as Robert F. Kennedy articulates it, connected to human dignity and the realization of individual freedom. Its linear, progressive temporality promises the realization of these ideals. Because it is a totalizing vision, Rist characterizes development as a “social belief,” “a kind of collective certainty,” and a “founding narrative” of modern society (Rist 2014, 22). However, he asks why, when development’s “promises are tirelessly repeated and experiments constantly reproduced [...] is it that each failure leads to another reprieve?,” and, thus, for example, one “decade of development” falling short of its goals leads to three more such decades (Rist 2014, 23). To answer this question, Rist focuses on the discrepancy between the temporality of mainstream economics and the reality of actual places and people, making Head’s effort to imagine what development means historically more legible.

Head’s ideas on development come from her personal involvement in agricultural reform and collective farming, which she experienced while living as a refugee in Botswana. Whereas Robert F. Kennedy’s emphasis on individual freedom syncs with Head’s own individualism, his deafness to the top-down, exclusionary logic of his developmental scenario exposes the contradictions that she tackled. Head’s engagement is an effort to decolonize development discourse, which means to break its link to the temporality it is hostage to and step away from the “inverted mirror” image of western expectations.¹⁰ To decolonize the model, we must reconceptualize how historical agents relate to time and alter the historical narrative of African modernity. According to Rist, typically we find:

... a contradiction between the mechanistic paradigm of equilibrium economics, for which ‘development is life’, and the growing disequilibrium bound up with irreversible phenomena pointing to the imminence of a catastrophe foretold. It is a peculiar feature of modern belief to have a constantly ambivalent relationship to time: on the one hand, the present is banalized and only future growth counts—you are here, but only to run somewhere else; on the other, because economic theory is incapable of seriously anticipating the ‘market needs’ of future generations, only the immediate dimension of ‘economic reality’ is held in view. By dint of believing in ‘the meaning of history,’ one ends up conjuring history away. (2014, 45)

“The present is banalized” captures the surrender of agency of newly independent peoples to the state, which becomes a cog in the “development” machine.¹¹ One has run ahead of oneself, believing in a promise of a certain kind of future, whereas what is actually unfolding is a catastrophic “disequilibrium” whose signs are overlooked.

But why make such a bargain to begin with? When many nations accepted the characterization that they were “underdeveloped” announced by President Truman in 1949, they made two assumptions. They were “asserting their claim to benefit from the ‘aid’ that was supposed to lead to ‘development’” and, at the same time, they “affirm [ed] the legal equality that was refused to them” (Rist 2014, 79). In other words, developmental aid functioned as recognition for these states and a bulwark against other forms of delegitimation. The promise of modernization held by the aid spoke to the aspiration to equal legal standing among nations that came with independence. But a political problem emerged, created in part by the hegemony of development as a “social belief”: a gap appeared between the citizenship rights of states in world bodies (most significantly the UN) and the imperfect citizenship of persons living in these states. As the discourse of economics deflected more explicitly politicized discourses of the Cold War (especially those pertaining to security), it attenuated the possibility for the people in the Global South to write their own histories.¹² Perceived as lesser and politically weak even as their states had sovereign standing in international bodies, the people, as the “underdeveloped,” inevitably came up short in a narrative written for them by the more powerful.¹³

Moreover, Rist’s definition of development (which he calls a sociologist’s definition rather than an economist’s) stresses that increased production results in the destruction of resources rather than progress. Thus, he adds an emphasis on sustainability to critiques of modernization discourse such as Ferguson’s:

‘Development’ consists of a set of practices, sometimes appearing to conflict with one another, which require—for the reproduction of society—the general transformation and destruction of the natural environment and social relations. Its aim is to increase the production of commodities (goods and services) geared, by way of exchange, to effective demand.

(Rist 2014, 13)

Development is an inevitably exploitative politics that protects the interests of global capital. It ties North and South together as two mutually dependent spheres where development happens in the North with the resources of the South. Critics of Head note that the long-term vision of the development plan in her novel, which involves increased production, could result in a more mixed outcome that falls short of her ideal vision (Garrett

1999, 131–132). Arguably, however, Head emphasizes the political changes produced by development work, showing how the community's ability to control the pace of economic change shapes a process of greater democratization. Thus, she does not fully elaborate on the economic end goals but looks instead at the immediate effects of agricultural reform.

Head is not ready to conjure history away in the name of a promise of modernization and therefore rejects the temporality of development that renders the people in the present invisible to history. Her effort to decolonize the idea of development focuses on placing the African subject in a history that charts an autonomous course. And, she recognizes that the narrative arc of such a history will not be linear. Her characters repeatedly retrieve practices from the past, which are sustaining and meaningful to the community and can ease the passage to modernity. A closer look at the novel will illuminate her alternative temporality.

A Slow Unfoldment

If the present in development discourse “is banalized” (cast aside as less important than the future), we find quite the opposite in Head's work. The concrete historical ground of the present is reaffirmed as consequential in order to move forward. But the present is also not simply there. It is conditioned by the past and hence contingent, dependent on the community's memory and tradition. The novel brings us close to the historical experience of ordinary people and demonstrates how their past informs their self-conception as historical agents moving into the future.

Discussing Head's work in terms of development evokes her Cold War context and places the issue of political self-determination in a necessary dialogue with development. Thus, Head imagines development by the people as a politics. *When Rain Clouds Gather* is set in 1965 as Botswana is undergoing the transition to independence, set for 1966. Her protagonist, Makhaya, is a refugee who, having escaped South Africa, must register with the local police. In order to determine whether he is a dangerous “saboteur” or, worse, a Communist, the white police officer asks him whether he supports Kwame Nkrumah (Head 2014, 13).¹⁴ Makhaya's negative answer reassures the police officer, although just as importantly Makhaya asserts his autonomy later by refusing to promise the same officer that he will “leave politics alone” (56). Head places Makhaya in the broader context of the continent's politics and, although she examines the aspiration to move out of poverty as the experience of rural African subjects, she explores the perspective of an urban “mad-dog” turned rural refugee who has distanced himself deliberately from political ideologies without relinquishing his political subjectivity (75). Makhaya is reborn in Botswana, transformed in the novel from a dehumanized subject to a leader of the village's political renewal (124). Therefore, Head's interest in showing how good leadership emerges from the people recalibrates the

imaginative structures of mainstream development theory that obviate the people as historical agents. Her optimism, asserted against South Africa's bleakness, allows that there must be a place free enough (perhaps because it's been abandoned as too poor to matter) where an organic process of community building can play itself out.¹⁵

The contrast of rural Botswana to South Africa under apartheid, afforded through the figure of Makhaya, is absolute. He fled South Africa in order to live in a free country where he can marry and have children who will be free (10). Moreover, he brings the reality of a modernized and violently repressed South Africa into relation with an atypical rural community that has turned away from traditional seasonal migrations, building "the large, wide, neatly thatched huts of permanent residence" (16). Golema Mmidi is already on the cusp of change, and a place where the old and new will clash.

Makhaya's transformation follows some of the principles that Head laid out as key to her own sense of personal growth:

Though my whole life and thoughts are bent towards my country, Africa, I live a precarious existence, never knowing from one day to the next whether I shall be forced into an unwelcome and painful exile, never knowing whom it is I offend, who it is who demands absolute loyalty from me; to all, I can give nothing; to all, especially politicians and those still fighting for liberation, I ask an excuse for taking, prematurely, in advance of the chaos, dislocation and confusion around me, the privilege of a steady, normal unfoldment of my own individuality. I ask it. I have taken an advance on what I have not earned in any battlefield—human dignity.

(Head 1995, 125)

Having claimed her dignity "in advance," Head seizes control of her own meaning. This advance is also the assertion of a privilege, "the privilege of a steady, normal unfoldment of my own individuality," which Head already possesses and is unwilling to give up for the future temporality of a liberation movement. Therefore, not only does Head break with the group to stand alone, but she claims control over her individual development as if it is an inalienable "privilege." "A steady, normal unfoldment" resists submitting to external dictates that aim to seduce by exceeding realistic expectations. The focus is on the present as the ground from which to develop. "Steady" and "normal" cannot be taken for granted. This freedom to develop is what Makhaya escapes South Africa for, and there is plenty of drama involved in achieving it.

We can extend Head's comment about personal growth to her views on communal development. In the novel, she explores how fair and equitable collectives emerge. A bottom-up politics is a precondition for meaningful development directed by the people. Head, therefore, is interested in the management of the land because the labor involved shapes

a political awakening. For the community, shared labor yields a new self-awareness of resources and future potential, and produces in the group something analogous to self-reflection by individuals.

Thus, Head imagines how the people will seize their autonomy before resolving the problem of their material poverty. She seeks to upend thinking that is oriented towards a prize in the future and relegates the people to a meanwhile in which they are invisible to history, buried under the burden of sacrifices asked of them. As we saw, Rist defines development as the “destruction of the natural environment *and* of social relations.” The cost to the fabric of human relations is harder to measure but is squarely in Head’s sight. Her central concern is maintaining the vitality of relation in a community. Much of Head’s utopian thrust, therefore, comes from her desire to articulate a sense of belonging and consequentiality of ordinary people to something bigger that is a counterweight to the destructiveness of global forces.

Although good triumphs in the story (the people overthrow their oppressive chief in a peaceful protest), Head makes us keenly aware of where evil lies. The rejection of South Africa provides Makhaya a clear compass, steering him in a new direction. He expresses this through his willingness to stand apart and, if need be, “to live in the bush,” giving up the modernity he is accustomed to in order to gain personal autonomy (Head 2014, 78). Various labels attach themselves to Makhaya. He is called a “fugitive,” “no tribalist,” a “refugee,” and hence a “criminal” and “murderer” by those who don’t want him in the community (54). He is also a “saboteur” (which is what he was tried for in South Africa), and a “persecuted man” (80). He refers to himself as a “stateless person” (82). But Head wants Makhaya’s stand to be broader than a defiance of apartheid: “There was much more than South Africa that he was running away from, and it included everything that he felt was keeping the continent of Africa at a standstill” (80). This stalling is at least in part a political problem. As a “persecuted man,” Makhaya is pushed to react, to be against: “On the one hand, you felt yourself the persecuted man, and on the other, you so easily fell prey to all the hate-making political ideologies, which seemed to him to be the order of the day” (80). In order not to belong to “hate-making,” he thinks he must walk alone.

Makhaya comes to understand his escape from South Africa as personal growth: “... as time went on he began to stress his own separateness, taking this as a guide that would lead him to clarity of thought in all his confusion” (75). He also acknowledges that place matters: “the process of rising up from the darkness is an intensely personal and private one, and that if you can find a society that leaves the individual to *develop freely* you ought to choose that society as your home” (75; emphasis added). By conjoining development and freedom, albeit personal development, Head echoes the rhetoric of Robert F. Kennedy (1966) and prefigures the pairing of these terms by Amartya Sen (2000).

But importantly, for Head, freedom is the condition necessary for development, not the prize gained at the end of a process of development. "To develop freely" places the two concepts as a pair traveling together on the same timeline where they are mutually reinforcing.

The place that matters is the village, Golema Mmidi, where Makhaya joins the agricultural cooperative created by the English agronomist, Gilbert, and partners with the women of the village who are the community's agricultural workers. His development becomes inevitably entangled with the community's. Together, Makhaya and the women, must devise strategies for bringing Gilbert's ideas to life. But, to succeed, they must overcome a political problem: their village chief's antagonism to their cooperative, which is eating into his own profits. This entangled situation presents a micropolitical theater for the potential pitfalls of the transition from colonialism even as Head also conveys the excitement of a new historical era and a sense of an open future.

Head uses Gilbert to situate the village within the broader geopolitics of the Cold War. An oddly singular figure, Gilbert is self-exiled from the West and makes agricultural reform in Golema Mmidi his life's work. However, Makhaya recognizes that Gilbert is drawn ideologically to the Russian and Chinese models of cooperative labor. Although a neophyte in agricultural science who accepts Gilbert's authority in that domain, he is skeptical of Gilbert's ideological inclinations and thinks that the economic models of Russia and China are inappropriate for Africa because of its much smaller population: "certain types of socialism might not be suited to African development," he tells Gilbert (77). Thus, Makhaya distances himself explicitly from communism. Because of his aversion to politics ("more than anything, [Makhaya] hated politics," 78), he hesitates to engage Gilbert in this conversation. What ultimately makes Makhaya speak up, however, is the topic of political freedom. He breaks his silence when Gilbert indicates his impatience with democracy and his approval of a "dictatorship that will feed, clothe and educate a people" (77). Makhaya in response declares emphatically that "I prefer a democracy for Africa, come what may," and suggests "Why not leave this country, even Africa, to trial and error?" (78).

The terms "trial and error" evoke the terms used by Head concerning individual "unfoldment": "steady" and "normal." These four terms (trial and error, steady and normal) are not neatly parallel, but they indicate trial and error, resulting from democratic choice, will yield a "steady" and "normal" development of the community. Thus, nonviolent change and processes that have legitimacy come to the fore. Achieving change in a manner that sustains communal ties is more important than reaching a programmatically set goal and sacrificing communal cohesion.

Makhaya's separateness helps him break from his past in South Africa. For Head's development story, however, he also needs to reintegrate in a community. Key to his new political and social orientation is the idea of

fraternity or brotherhood, which an older villager, sympathetic to his suffering, conveys to him. In Makhaya's encounter with Mma-Millipede, Head sketches an emotionally compelling meeting of two minds and hearts that knits him definitively into the community. In a moment when he despairs that perhaps Golema Mmidi is not different enough from the South Africa he left, he confesses to Mma-Millipede that he has lost his sense of identification with humanity: "I don't think I accept the other man as my brother" (126). This echoes something we are told about Makhaya in the opening scene when he is waiting at the border to escape: "The only way you could sense his inner discord was through a trick he had of slightly averting his face as though no man was his brother or worthy of trust" (1). When Makhaya seems to hit bottom, he realizes that the whole village, his place of refuge, is under the thumb of a tyrannical chief. He sees the village as stuck in a struggle against the chief's refusal of the villagers' initiatives and capacity for action. His place of refuge looks more like a trap:

Chief Matenge is one lout, cheat, dog, swine. But Matenges everywhere get themselves into a position over the poor. I hate the swine. Sometimes I don't know what I feel about the poor, except that I, being poor too, say I've had enough of swines. I say I've had enough of those tin gods called white men, too. I want to see them blown up but I've run away, not because they are my brothers, but because a crowd is going to do the blowing up. I don't like crowds. I'd like to kill if I had to but I am not sure what I'm killing when I'm in a crowd. I'm not sure of anything anymore, least of all who my brother is. (126)

Although willing to act, willing even to kill if necessary, Makhaya is troubled by his inability to feel committed to other human beings. His sense of isolation is both a symptom, shaped by the contingencies of his world, and a moral stance: he won't kill in the name of a group, as a partisan.

Let he too stalls or contributes to the general "standstill" of Africa, he turns for assurance to a distinctly peripheral subject—a poor, devoutly Christian older, village woman. The encounter is mutually transforming. By showing us Mma-Millipede through Makhaya's eyes, Head makes her consequential for the reader. Mma-Millipede senses the importance of this moment because she recognizes Makhaya's potential to transform her community, if only his alienation can be overcome. She searches for words to communicate hope in some ultimate justice and to speak authentically in her own voice without risking alienating Makhaya with references to the Bible (125). Because her faith in humanity finds an echo of affirmation and recognition in Makhaya, she succeeds: "He was never to know how to thank her for confirming his view that everything in life depended on generosity" (127). Generosity, which also implies tolerance, is the value

that knits community, making work on the cooperative possible. By contrast, development, geared towards increasing wealth, is not about generosity even though it claims that its starting impulse is to help.

This revived neighborliness and communion fosters the economic transformation of Golema Mmidi: the villagers create a tobacco farm and enclose the pastures. Gilbert provides technical guidance, but Makhaya leads the women, working amongst them as an equal and against the backdrop of an increasingly severe drought that threatens their lives. The women's success gains the cooperation of the men in the village and the transformation seems far-reaching except that the villagers anticipate that their progress will be interrupted by the chief. The novel's denouement, therefore, focuses on the political roadblocks inhibiting bottom-up development. All the gains would be reversed and worse if the people cannot successfully challenge the chief's self-serving rule and his seemingly permanent political tenure.

Head describes the oncoming confrontation in terms that emphasize its slow temporality: "They had been straining together in one direction for years, and Matenge [the chief] had been straining in the opposite direction, always pulling them down" (170). The time has come to change the political structure that allows Matenge to benefit exclusively from the community's economic resources. When the people show up at the chief's house in a spontaneous action to protest his treatment of the leader among the women of the cooperative, Matenge shamefully commits suicide instead of facing them. Thus, the chief is brought down without Makhaya having to make good on his threat to kill him. The endless war against the people comes to a halt as they seize their freedom and with it press for a new political arrangement. But this big change comes as a result of an effort that was ongoing "for years," nurturing the epiphany of the people's spontaneous coming together.

Conclusion

In order to situate Head's novel alongside the social scientific literature that critiques the temporality of development, we can turn to Ferguson who, alluding to Stephen Jay Gould, urges us to "develop 'bushy,' nonlinear ways of conceptualizing the ways that different, coexisting strategies of urban-rural mobility have been distributed over time" (Ferguson 1999, 43). Gould describes evolution as "a copiously branching bush" instead of a "ladder" where humans occupy the top step (Gould 1996, 21). Head's protagonist, who is mobile, reverses the trajectory more frequently depicted in fiction that shows the modernizing subject moving from the rural to the urban (Ferguson 1999, 4-5). More suggestively, bushes are literally significant in Head's agricultural novel because they contribute to ecologically sustainable uses of the land. They gain symbolic significance as well by capturing an essence of the

historical changes experienced by the community: the “bushy” pattern alluded to by Ferguson.

The main developmental intervention in the novel aims to minimize the erosion that creates conditions for devastating cyclical droughts. A native bush, the thornbush, becomes a key element of this progress narrative when Makhaya intuitively grasps the plant’s potential and demonstrates his grasp of the science that the English agronomist, Gilbert, teaches him. Observing the thornbush in seed with its “pods twined tightly inward until they were coiled springs,” he sees them burst, “eject(ing) the seeds high into the air” (Head 2014, 73). Subsequently, Makhaya learns that the thornbush is the native groundcover that protects the soil from erosion. Gilbert explains that goats prefer the thornbush to grasses and desertification ensued in parts of Africa where goats decimated the plants (82). To avoid a similar result, it is important to return the thornbush and control what goats eat. Bringing the cattle to graze in controlled areas closer to the village and reforming agriculture to produce cash crops through small cooperatives will all turn things around (150). Makhaya is attracted particularly to the economics of Gilbert’s plan: the small cooperatives will build up capacity gradually and transform society slowly. Thus, he sees this as a promising plan for bringing-up the poor with him, for a bottom-up development (138).

Thus, the thornbush lends itself to a metaphorical reading, capturing insights about the course of historical change. Its physical contours and manner of propagation symbolize the increasing complexity and hazardness of the historical changes that affect the community. This “bushy” pattern of events must be acknowledged and managed. Reading along the grain of Head’s optimism, we might also see Makhaya as a thornbush seed and his unexpected arrival in the village spreading the people’s resilient love of freedom into more fertile ground.

What does it take for an ordinary man to “make do” in Golema Mmidi? Makhaya, we are told, “was just an ordinary man and he wanted to stay that way all his life. None of the tinsel and glitter of the world attracted him but just what there was to live on and make do in a village like Golema Mmidi ... Africa was your country and there was no place else where a black man would come into his own and eventually lift up his head with dignity” (166). The goal seems at first modest and a retrenchment from a more ambitious commitment to South Africa’s liberation struggle. But the fulfillment of this simple goal is complex and gets at core ideas that challenge the orthodoxy of development. Development might appear to promise more but will deliver less than what Makhaya is aiming for. Writing during the Cold War, Head finds a way to articulate an aspiration to political freedom and autonomy outside the box of the political rifts that consumed and distorted Africa’s political movements. Her thinking on development is not orthodox and comes full circle back to politics, linking economic progress directed by

the people to the democratization of Africa without external interference. Keeping the focus on development also helped Head obviate the Cold War binarism that reduced the politics of her era to unproductive ideological clashes. Thus, her work is powerful for the way it suggests the synergy among different important aspirations (modernization, increased wealth, freedom from oppression) and the need above all to allow for “trial and error” instead of imposing external timelines. Attentive to what Ferguson has called “the nonlinear loops and reversals” of historical change (1999, 250), Head hoped that Africa would be allowed to take its time and follow its course.

Notes

- 1 James Ferguson discusses the critics of development, Wolfgang Sachs and Gustavo Esteva, within the context of his own more nuanced position, which holds that to declare the end of development in absolute terms replicates the linear temporality of development theory itself, one of its major problems (Ferguson, 1999, 245–246). I discuss the challenges of temporality below, but note here that, according to Ferguson, both Sachs and Esteva declare the end of development in 1992. Borrowing from Sachs’s terms, Ferguson sums up the critics: development is “a disastrous failure now made ‘obsolete,’ ‘outdated by history’” (Ferguson, 1999, 245). Esteva, moreover, sees development as the hostage taking of third world peoples, “to be enslaved to others’ experience and dreams” (quoted in Ferguson, 1999, 246).
- 2 These challenges come from Ferguson (1999) and Frederick Cooper, both of whom stress in particular the continuity with colonialism. For the post-Cold War trajectory of development see Ferguson (2006). As Phyllis Taoua argues, Amartya Sen’s “development as freedom” became the new mantra after the Cold War (2018, 23–24). Sen compellingly articulates national and global economic goals as dimensions of personal, individual aspiration that need the guarantee of a democratic state and hence the condition of political freedom (Taoua, 2018, 218).
- 3 Telepneva (2018) offers a revisionist argument against the dominant historiography, which she also usefully summarizes. Her position is that the Soviet Union remained invested in the transformation of African economies even later, and its engagement had significant input from Africans.
- 4 In “theater for development,” “development” and “resistance” become interchangeable terms (Desai, 1991, 8). Zakes Mda has made the case for an alternative theater of development that works improvisationally to capture a community’s direction and avoid the “top-down, one-way flow of information” brought by outsiders (Mda, 1990, 352). This is an oppositional practice: “Development must imply liberation, a freeing from all forms of oppression” (Mda, 1990, 354).
- 5 Head’s identity crisis was further complicated by her birth history. She grew up with a foster family in a “coloured” community but learned later that her mother was a white woman with a history of mental illness. Her black father’s identity is not known, and the circumstances of her parents’ relationship are obscure (Eilersen, 1996, 3–9). Moreover, Head witnessed the arrest and persecution of many journalists and writers by the apartheid regime, while also feeling discriminated against as a woman amongst politically active men (Eilersen, 1996, 60).

- 6 Thus, “[b]y the start of the twenty-first century Africa was poorer than during the late 1960s” (Jeffrey Sachs quoted in Taoua, 2018, 224). Ferguson’s study of the *Zambian Copperbelt* makes this reality come to life: “That the development story was a myth, and in some respects a trap, does not make the abrupt withdrawal of its promises easier to take, or any less of a tragedy for those whose hopes and legitimate expectations have been shattered” (1999, 249). Ferguson describes this fall as an experience of “abjection” that figuratively threw Zambians out of their home, making them feel out of place in their own society (1999, 236).
- 7 This was also two years after the conclusion of the Rivonia Trial in June 1964 and Nelson Mandela’s imprisonment. It was also two years after Dennis Brutus (a close associate of Head’s) went to prison.
- 8 There are some politically uncomfortable echoes in this speech. Robert Kennedy plays with earlier ambitions of a South African internationalism as advanced by Jan Smuts in the late 1940s. This internationalism aimed to secure South Africa’s modernizing role on the continent in order to hold back the push for decolonization (Mazower, 2009: 153–154).
- 9 His language describing the continent stresses its underdeveloped resources: “Just to the north of here are lands of challenge and opportunity—rich in natural resources, land and minerals and people. Yet they are also lands confronted by the greatest odds—overwhelming ignorance, internal tensions and strife, and great obstacles of climate and geography” (1966).
- 10 According to Gustavo Estevan, the homogenizing term “underdeveloped” and its assumptions turned a continent “into an inverted mirror of others’ reality” (quoted in Ferguson, 1999, 246).
- 11 There are, of course, beneficiaries of this arrangement, those Cooper calls the “gatekeepers.” Cooper, as noted, sees this class as the inheritors of the colonial regime who then help to extend a very similar extractive and exploitative relation of African states to the capitalist west with the help of development policies (Cooper, 2019, 130).
- 12 Ferguson calls development an “anti-politics machine” (1999, 248).
- 13 Developing nations acting as a block pushed back with the United Nations Declaration of the New International Economic Order (1975), which aimed to reorganize global economic governance (Gilman, 2015, 5). Although the NIEO failed to gain traction and is “a figment of a now all but lost political imaginary,” it is the focus of revisionist attention by historians who see in it a different arc of the development narrative (Gilman, 2015, 1).
- 14 Ghana’s nationalist leader, Nkrumah was a Pan-Africanist. He also undertook ambitious and controversial development projects to build national industries. He was overthrown in 1966, hence the political test question given to Makhaya comes on the eve of Nkrumah’s ouster.
- 15 Botswana had a history of being too poor to matter. The British protectorate of Bechuanaland was established by annexation during the scramble for Africa in March 1885. As a protectorate rather than a colony, it maintained a meaningful degree of continuity in its political institutions and, as regards development, it was neglected. The protectorate served mostly as a source of labor for South African mines and as territory through which the British could build a railroad to Rhodesia. Bechuanaland had very limited settlement by whites.

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15 Raindrop on Dusty Ground: Nuruddin Farah, Somalia, and the Cold War

Bhakti Shringarpure

A distinct feature of Nuruddin Farah's novels is the immediacy with which he crafts fiction out of events that can be classified as recent or contemporary. For Farah, the novel becomes a vehicle for narrating, framing and intervening in recently lived political events and upheavals that happen in Somalia and surrounding regions. Farah thus presents a challenge to Somali historiography at the outset since he frames versions of history even before they have been officially brought into being. Along the way, the larger historical forces such as colonialism, various wars, clan conflicts, the Cold War, and foreign interventions, among others, are juxtaposed with an unfolding Somali history and tend to also get recast and re-determined in his novels. Given Somalia's difficult and long term entanglement with histories of the Cold War, it is imperative to explore the ways in which Farah's works have enabled points of entry into Somali historiography during the period of the Cold War through several of his novels published during the late seventies and eighties through sites and characters that often serve to stage political interventions. In fact, Farah's works during that time serve as a strong reminder that Somalia was a hotspot of the Cold War. While historical accounts of the period focus far too intensively on the dictatorship, Farah's novels become a site of contest between history and literature. His works uphold a radically complex version of Somali history in which the Cold War is a dominant protagonist, and wherein literature becomes a space for staging alternative accounts of the period through succinct and innovative historiographic interventions.

This chapter focuses on *Variations on the Theme of an African Dictatorship* trilogy that comprises the novels *Sweet and Sour Milk* (1979), *Sardines* (1981), and *Close Sesame* (1983). Despite the fact that *Farah's Blood in the Sun* trilogy (1986–1998) also evokes elements of the Cold War, *Variations* can be fittingly referred to as his Cold War trilogy given its more direct engagement with that period. Here, Farah attempts to serve history as an “illuminated print” much like an X-ray to gain depth through carefully positioned literary tropes and approaches: the family is allegorized as nation; the space of the polyphonic debate

facilitates an ethical approach to an unfolding history; the focus on characters that are misfits or outsiders point towards a penchant for unearthing unofficial histories; and the evocation of a Cold War atmosphere of eerie suspicion, suspense, and foreboding strengthens the emotional tenor of the trilogy offering the reader a glimpse into the lived reality of the moment (Farah 2006a, 104).

African Literature, the Cold War and Questions of Historiography

The simultaneously unfolding Cold War period and African decolonization movements played a significant role in shaping African post-colonial literary history though not always in an obvious sense, and in fact the Cold War was not an urgent concern in terms of representation or thematic focus for many writers. The role of the Cold War was far more underhanded. The two superpowers vied for cultural supremacy through initiatives such as the American Congress for Cultural Freedom or the Afro-Asian Writers Association in the USSR which were engaged in promoting literary models, aesthetic systems and political viewpoints that were seen as geopolitically strategic.¹ These soft power interventions were facilitated through the promotion of certain writers over others, the awarding of literary prizes, organization of conferences, and funding of small and large-scale publishing projects. Cold War scholarship of the past two decades has been crucial in uncovering some of these hidden systems and revealing that several writers were nourished by one system or another.² Not only did this have repercussions on how we conceived of a canon of postcolonial literature but it has also opened up new nodes and sites through which literary histories could be reconceived.

Scholars of literary studies have begun the work of putting writers from the Global South through the sieve of the Cold War matrix whereby the systems, frameworks and ideologies birthed during that time are being made to bear upon the works of the writers, the reception of their works, their political entanglements, and analyses of their canonical or excluded statuses. From the African continent, for example, well known writers such as Tayeb Salih, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and Ousmane Sembène have been put under scrutiny in order to ascertain if they were influenced by the Cold War dynamics whether in terms of funding, aesthetics, or politics.³ Many of their literary works become sites wherein these binaristic, whitewashed histories of the Cold War are interrogated and destabilized. Within this prolific and canonical group, the works and the figure of Nuruddin Farah have not yet been examined at any length and yet he does have the most substantial engagement with the Cold War in his novels. I undertake this task in my chapter and will bring together Farah's novels, existing literary criticism on his works, and an interview I conducted with him via email to argue that Farah has

been directly engaged in framing the Cold War's impact on Somalia. Indeed, the *Variations* trilogy in particular becomes a site of contest between literature and history as Farah nudges the readers towards new historiographic models for simultaneously narrating layered and complex histories of Somalia as well as that of the place of Africa in the global Cold War.

As the period of the Cold War intersected with almost all decolonization movements across the planet, the huge influx of writing from newly independent, postcolonial regions eventually came to constitute the canon of postcolonial literature. For the most part, it is rightly assumed that postcolonial literature tries to challenge colonial versions of events and here, the historical novel becomes a particularly potent and revolutionary genre for the task of centralizing history and retelling it from the perspectives of racialized, previously colonized, and deliberately marginalized perspectives. Specifically using the example of African postcolonial literatures as countering the "long and woeful tradition of colonialist historiography" M. Keith Booker and Dubravka Juraga explain that it has unfortunately "played a central role in the European colonial domination of Africa by envisioning Africa as a timeless place without history, mired in the primeval past and unable to move forward until the European colonizers brought new energies and new knowledge to the continent" (Booker and Juraga 2006, 85). Writers that have since been celebrated, canonized and widely researched such as Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Ousmane Sembène, and Assia Djebar are some of the few amongst many that have worked specifically to upend colonialist historiographic narratives through works that make Africa-centric, anticolonial historical accounts central to their literary and artistic works.

The Cold War—which was never cold but in fact raged hot and furious in most postcolonial regions—has been narrated and re-narrated by historians over the past decades. Most of these histories have tended to be partisan in nature and showed a marginal understanding of the brutal reach of the Cold War superpowers as they waged proxy wars, engaged in weapons flooding, and supported and thwarted dictators and military leaders as per their geopolitical strategies in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and the Middle East. The trail of blood has been obfuscated by historical versions of the Cold War as largely peaceful, sometimes even heralded as a symbol of great restraint shown by the U.S. and USSR, and described as the period of a "Long Peace." Andrew Hammond writes that, "The privileging of Western experience has not only taken place in the spheres of political rhetoric and Cold War historiography. In that strand of Western scholarship that examines the literary response to the international crisis of 1945 to 1989, there is a similar tendency to define 'Cold War' by the conditions where war was coldest, and to take American and Western European writing as the proper ground of study" (Hammond 2006, 3).

Fortunately, in the past fifteen years, some of Hammond's accurate observations have undergone a shift, and there has come about an opening up of the site of Cold War histories. Several new works have attempted to write inclusive and expansive histories of a *longue durée* war that Odd Arne-Westad has rightly labeled as "global."⁴ Additionally, innovative scholarship in the field of Cold War studies with a particular focus on literature and culture has begun to decenter and reshape these existing historical accounts, and within this, literary interventions in Cold War historiography are of particular importance to this chapter. This chapter approaches Farah's trilogy through the various considerations and frameworks outlined above while staying focused on his way of nuancing Somali history. The *Variations* trilogy reveals that the Somali periods of decolonization and postcolonial nation formation were heavily interrupted and manipulated by Cold War currents. This presents a challenge for writing a work of literature than can simultaneously engage a rigorous historiography. Compared to his peer African writers, Farah seems to have arrived at a more accurate and comprehensive picture of how a nation was caught between Cold War forces by using the form of the novel to position a contesting and complex relationship between literature and history.

Story-Writing as History-Writing

The fact that the novel has had a long, productive, symbiotic, and sometimes embattled relationship with history is a fairly well explored aspect of literary studies. However Farah's novels do not neatly fit the category of the "historical novel" though sometimes his works give the impression of straddling elements of the form of the historical novel. Many aspects of Georg Lukács' foundational work on the historical novel hold true in the case of Farah. In epitomizing Walter Scott as a great historical novelist, Lukács describes certain characteristics of historical novels that indeed might apply to Farah; especially the notion of a "mediocre hero" who arrives fully formed in the psychological sense and only evolves within the framework of the social-historical. This hero portrays the "great crises of historical life" wherein "hostile social forces, bent on one another's destruction, are everywhere colliding" (Lukács 1962, 36). Herein the novelist "by disclosing the actual conditions of life, the actual growing crisis in people's lives, depicts all the problems of popular life which lead up to the historical crisis" (Lukács 1962, 38). The mediocre hero caught in these forces allows the reader to understand why the nation has been torn by conflict, and to grasp the many camps and sides that this hero has been caught in the midst of. Lukács finds the most important function of the historical novel through these observations: "What matters therefore in the historical novel is not the re-telling of great historical events, but the poetic awakening of the people who figured in those events. What matters is that we should re-

experience the social and human motives which led men to think, feel and act just as they did in historical reality” (Lukács 1962, 42). Included in such novels are characters of high birth and great power who will only be treated as marginal thus allowing for a confrontation between various tiers of a rapidly altering, conflicted society.

Some of these ideas from Lukács’ watershed theories of the historical novel can be transposed directly onto the work of Farah. In Farah’s trilogy, the aged character Deeriye reflects on his youth and his political coming of age when he recalls that he was a mere 22 years old when he experienced “the first political stir, like a raindrop on dusty ground” (Farah, 2002, 35). The protagonists in the *Variations* trilogy such as Loyaan in *Sweet and Sour Milk*, Medina in *Sardines*, as well as Deeriye are disaffected, melancholic types who have been pushed into the vortex of these political stirs that soon become monumental in shaping Somali history. They have gotten squeezed into the deeply ruinous and frightening forces of the Cold War-sponsored dictatorship, and are now subsumed within emotionally distressing familial dynamics thus giving rise to complex historical-social-personal crises that each protagonist must cope with, resolve, and perhaps even overcome. Important military leaders and even the dictator Siyad Barre make appearances as minor characters. Yet Farah’s novels while checking off some of Lukács’ criteria do not much confirm to the schema of realism that the typical historical novel should ideally embrace. Fiona Moolla has described Farah’s form adventures as tracing a “trajectory from a kind of proto-realism to modernism and postmodernism returning latterly to realism” (Moolla 2014, 1). Thus while realism figures in his work, Farah tends to experiment with modernist techniques with irony, alienated individualism, and fragmentation of identity taking precedence over tenets of traditional realism (Moolla 2014, 14). Elsewhere, Derek Wright has argued that *Variations* “reveals many of the standard features of post-modern fiction” by generating “multiple, superimposed orders of reality,” a “play of analogic motif and parallelism,” and the “favoring of fragmented, composite characters” over singular or unitary personalities (Moolla 2014, 99).

If Farah evades formal classification as a writer of historical novel, how does Farah invoke and imbricate history in his work? One approach for understanding Farah’s relationship to history can be drawn from the work of Hayden White who asks what it means to think historically and reflects on the unique characteristics of a specifically historical method of inquiry (White 1973, 5). To summarize rather sweepingly, White believes that all history-writing is story-writing. While White’s intervention targets historians, it is possible to reverse this notion and to consider story-writing as history-writing in order to understand the ways in which novelists might employ history in their texts. Farah, of course, admits to being deeply impacted by the confluence of historical forces in his home

country Somalia during the Cold War, especially during and after the publication of his first two works, *From a Crooked Rib* and *A Naked Needle*. In an interview via email, Farah wrote that he was directly and personally affected by the Cold War and after writing his two novels, he “was taken to task in public by so-called Somali intellectuals, who questioned my political leanings; accused me of being a writer with petit bourgeoisie tendencies and a sick one at that, ideologically-speaking” (Shringarpure 2019b, 5). In order to “mollify this prolixity” Farah was then sent off to the Soviet Union for about two months and made to meet writers from the Soviet bloc. Without doubt this fundamentally influenced the trilogy that followed the first two novels. Farah’s three novels that came after this set of events were certainly more historically grounded than the previous two, and also rigorous in their critique of the Cold War-manipulated dictatorship and the political frameworks it had brought into being.

It is not an overstatement to claim that Farah is the first novelist from Africa to treat the Cold War seriously and overtly in literature. There are two main reasons why this remains under the radar despite Farah’s achievements, vast oeuvre, and awards in a career that has now spanned 50 years. First, as I outlined earlier, the Cold War was itself treated as a binary formation and did not, until recently, include the hot wars and geopolitical interventions that were taking place in two-thirds of the decolonizing Third World. The second reason is more controversial and it emerges as a result of sustained misreadings over many decades that claim Farah as a postcolonial writer. Somalia, which is Farah’s main subject of literary exploration, does have an archetypal postcolonial history given that it was divided between Italian, French, and English colonial powers, a fact that has intensively shaped the linguistic, political, and cultural conflicts that define the region to this day. Yet Farah’s novels rarely take these colonial powers to task as writers such as Ngũgĩ, Achebe, or Dangarembga with belligerent anticolonial politics tend to do.⁵ Sometimes, Farah’s characters even appear to uncritically idolize certain European languages and cultural traits. In fact, Farah’s career-long preoccupation has been and continues to be problems inherent in Somali politics and culture and Somalia as failed nation. Religious orthodoxy, patriarchal frameworks, cultural provincialism, clannishness, and bad leadership in Somalia are consistently panned in his novels. While I do not intend to develop this argument further in the chapter, my goal here is to illustrate that none of Farah’s novels really engage the negative effects of colonialism but tend to blame a particularly Somali chauvinism and a narrow Somali nationalism as having brought these problems upon themselves. In thus mounting a three-part critique of the dictatorship in Somalia right in the heels of having been sent off to the former USSR, Farah is thus perfectly poised to formulate a unique historiography and a pointed critique of the Cold War as it penetrated the

deep recesses of individual and collective dynamics in Somalia at the time.

Farah claims that his desire to expose “Somalia of the day as a puppet of the Soviet bloc” is evident in the first novel of the trilogy, *Sweet and Sour Milk*. I would argue that Farah’s fierce insistence on representing and critiquing Soviet meddling in Somalia is evident in all three of the *Variations* novels. In fact, I would go as far as to claim that the arrival of the U.S. in Farah’s work directly coincides with the moment that Somalia allies with the U.S. before and after the Ogaden war, and effectively destabilizes its relationship with the USSR.⁶ The *Blood in the Sun* trilogy reflects this American involvement as American characters and characters who visit the U.S. as well as Farah’s critiques of American interventions in Somali politics start to pop up in the novels *Maps* (1986), *Gifts* (1993), and *Secrets* (1998). All three novels of *Variations* center around cosmopolitan, educated, bourgeois, and urban protagonists who have been caught in intrigues of the dictatorship in some form. They are also intertwined in family units that mirror patriarchal and violent tyrannies within the private realm of the domestic sphere. With the family cast as a microcosm of the nation-state, *Variations* willingly enters the territory of national allegory but Farah is also simultaneously committed to an exploration of individualism. In fact, Moolla argues that several scholars have observed this through line in Farah’s work: “the novels display a concern with the subject as individual operated on by the power of both the postcolonial state and tradition” (Moolla 2014, 8) and individual resistance to these state forces is also observed in the novels. Moolla correctly claims that “Individual autonomy enjoys ontological status in Farah’s novels. Proceeding out of this autonomy is the radical freedom to define the self with a consequent valorization of freedom above other values” (Moolla 2014, 9). *Variations*, thus, assembles a set of characters who straddle individual and political concerns that always seem to be at odds with each other. The state and the family, the national and anti-national, freedom and constraint, and submission and rebellion jostle against each other endlessly to enable a narrative structure that, I argue, present us with an ambivalence that characterizes Farah’s understanding of the Cold War. It is crucial to remember that Farah was fully cognizant of the political and cultural influence of the Cold War upon Somali politics and on Somali individuals. And though the Siyad Barre dictatorship was a negative iteration of the Cold War, the cosmopolitan characters with their foreign travel, their cultural leanings toward Europe, and their socialism-inflected resistance to the dictatorship also owe a debt to the kind of transnational and international solidarities and friendships that the Cold War brought about.

One of the primary functions of Farah’s construction of individual protagonists as well as ideals of individualism is the way in which it allows for the creation of a Cold War atmosphere. I would describe such

an atmosphere by drawing from the more mainstream fictions about the Cold War. The television series *The Americans*, several John Le Carré books, and films like *Tinker, Tailor, Sailor, Spy* or *The Good Shepherd* are only a few examples out of scores of such cultural products. In these works, the Cold War is a universe of spies, surveillance, subterranean torture rooms, secrets and rumors, hidden or multiple identities, and mysterious memos. An eerie atmosphere of suspicion and mystery prevails. Suspense hangs in the air as characters confront an unknown future and daily life is inflected with fear. The feeling of being followed, the sudden confrontation with violence, and the emotional intensity of friends or relatives being disappeared is part of the emotional architecture of many Cold War fictions. In *Variations*, each novel explores several major and minor characters coping with the brutal secrecy of the totalitarian Somali state where KGB style methods could easily mean torture, imprisonment, or assassination without warning or logical cause. Soyaan is mysteriously poisoned in *Sweet and Sour Milk* and his twin Loyaan is forcibly packed off to Belgrade. In *Sardines*, the once famous singer Dulman is always followed and carefully watched. And in *Close Sesame*, the entire underground dissident movement tracked throughout the trilogy is finally revealed with immense costs to Deeriye's family and the death of his son Mursal. The extraordinary daily fear is also compounded by the discovery of documents such as the Memorandum that is rumored to have caused Soyaan's death. Characters who may or may not work for the General pose veiled threats to the individual protagonists deepening their isolation and causing rifts between lovers, siblings, and parents. Additionally, Farah makes a significant intervention by narrating the details of the Cold War atmosphere in an African setting. Much of the fictions I drew on previously tend to be situated only within Europe, the U.S., or the former USSR and only feature European, American, or Russian protagonists without much attention to the places in Asia and Africa. In Farah's trilogy, the emotional toll of the Cold War atmosphere upon the individuals and their daily brushes with violence and threats builds for an evocative and tense historical narrative that precisely represents the African subject caught as a proxy figure in Cold War geopolitical manipulations.

It is within this toggling back and forth from the individual to the socio-political, the psychological to the allegorical, the realist to post-modern, and the material to the spectral that Farah's historiographic interventions can be located. The larger question for this chapter is that if the *Variations* trilogy could be characterized as his foray into history-writing or what R. John Williams has called "doing history," what indeed are the characteristics of this mode and method? (Williams 2006). In order to accommodate ambivalences, contradictions, and ambiguities, it can be useful to read Farah contrapuntally with regards to the Cold War. I draw from Edward Said's evocative observation that reading recent history tends to imply an opposition that engages "two different

perspectives, two historiographies, one linear and subsuming, the other contrapuntal and often nomadic” (Said 1994, xxv). Contrapuntal and nomadic reading methods are ideal for better understanding Farah’s relationship to historical forces of the moment because his relationship to empire, more generally, and to the Cold War and the Somali dictatorship, more particularly, yield contradictions and disjunctures very much in the vein of the literary and musical texts that Said explores. Works by Albert Camus, Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, or the opera, *Aida*, are meant to be read contrapuntally according to Said because they may reveal “a structure of reference and attitude, a web of affiliations, connections, decisions, and collaborations, which can be read as leaving a set of ghostly notations” (Said 1994, 125). Furthermore Said insists: “My point in this contrapuntal reading is to emphasize and highlight the disjunctions, not to overlook or play them down” (Said 1994, 146). Said’s approach encourages a reading of *Variations* in a way that clarifies Farah’s ambivalence about the Cold War and the influence it has on Somalia as a place as well as on its characters. On the one hand, Farah views the Soviet Union and its socialist and communist ideologies as totalitarian in nature: he sees them as poisonous to Somali society and believes that Barre’s authoritarianism has been led astray by these false ideals. On the other hand, Farah paints loving portraits of characters who espouse an emancipated, liberal cosmopolitanism and are beneficiaries of the Cold War’s transnational solidarities and travels. Fluent in several languages and with jobs that take them to Western and Eastern Europe, and sometimes even the United States, these characters epitomize a neutral, intellectual third zone that aspires to articulate an alternative genealogy of a post-independence, utopic African identity. In this trilogy, the Cold War is destructive yet generative, tyrannical yet freeing, binding yet mobile, and the *Variations* trilogy nurses and develops these multi-pronged formulations in Farah’s work along the way shedding light on a reframed Somali history.

Historiographic Interventions in Variations

All three novels of the *Variations* trilogy are set in Mogadishu and explore the lives of educated and privileged Somali elite under the dictatorship of Siyad Barre who is simply referred to as the “General.” Characters in each novel navigate an intertwined private and public sphere whereby Farah overtly illustrates the ways in which the domestic and the intimate mirror the politics of the national and the external sphere. Juraga writes that the reverse is also true, that the trilogy illustrates that “the Somali regime of the 1970s and the 1980s was in many ways an extension of the Somali patriarchal family” (Juraga 2002, 283). The family thus becomes a foundation upon which Farah constructs an affective but critical narrative of Somali history. *Sweet and Sour Milk* is

the most openly allegorical in casting Keynaan, the tyrannical patriarch who reproduces the dynamics and the violence of the dictatorship in his own home. Through Keynaan's abusive treatment of his wife and children, his impulse to use violence as a solution and his cold-hearted involvement in the assassination of his own son Soyaan, Farah illustrates that the image of a caring, paternal and parental nation-state is a false construct. Somalia, just like Keynaan's household, is a totalitarian regime. And if Loyaan who is trying to get to the bottom of his twin Soyaan's murder can be allegorized as Somalia, a country caught in the nightmarish grip of Cold War geopolitics, then characters such as Margaritta and Ahmed-Wellie become shadowy puppeteers who seem to symbolize the invisible hand of the Cold War. A distraught, befuddled and depressed Loyaan enters the vortex of a personal and political crisis:

What am I? Who am I? Whom am I dealing with? What century is this? Of what era must I partake fully, actively? Must he fully and actively belong to this century of technology, of SAMs, MiGs and satellites and KGBs and CIA espionage networks, or to one of Beydans and Qummans, one of wizardry and witchcraft and hair-burning rights of sorcery? It was then that he remembered something said by no less than Clemenceau... . Said Clemenceau: "In one generation, Americans have had the most unique experience of the history of mankind; in only one generation, American ceased being referred to as a barbaric nation and has qualified itself to be labelled decadent." What about Africa? What about Saudi Arabia? What about Iran? What would Clemenceau's comments have been were he now alive to make comments about persons like myself, like Soyaan and like most of the people we've lived with, known and shared our days and nights with? What would he have said of us? In search of an answer Loyaan looked in Beydaan's direction... She had been born a couple of years before he was, although the claims of pregnancies such as this and life with Keynaan had made their mark. It was not so much a question of generation, liking or dividing persons in this continent. No, it was a question of how cultural trends, what strands of cultural affinities hung down and reached one.

(Farah 2006c, 150; emphasis in original)

Loyaan allegorizes himself through the image of a split Somalia caught between the Cold War's focused modernity imposed through technology and media, and a traditional way of life. Indeed, Loyaan's interior monologue is sophisticated and intellectually grounded with quotations from Clemenceau that reveal anxieties about a bipolar world undergirded by narratives of historical progress. His father's mistress Beydaan, despite being Loyaan's age, represents the countries left behind and

Loyaan portrays himself as neither here nor there but as existing in the bizarre space of crossfire between cultural affinities, modernity, and inter-generational differences. The family as an allegorical unit that functions as a commentary on unfolding politics and history is Farah's first historiographic intervention into the Cold War and Somalia as nation. The site of the family allows for an affective and speculative historical narrative to thrive. More importantly, it serves to undercut the Cold War rhetoric of socialism, revolution, and totalitarian notions of communism through characters that engage in incisive intellectual debates and interior monologues within the space of the home and the familial. The political rhetoric tends to cast out complexity of feelings and processes of individuation but the family set up can facilitate these somewhat charged emotional articulations. The use of allegory itself allows for Farah to develop a staunch moral politics, something that would be frowned upon in a traditional work of history. In fact, while the novels might be perceived as political allegories they are in fact moral allegories which empower Loyaan and later Medina, the protagonist, to surveil his surroundings and eventually pronounce judgement upon authoritarian structures of the country and by extension, the autocratic nation-state.

Yet another way in which Farah's novels are "doing history" are through the site of the long, polyphonic debate between sets of characters that takes place at regular intervals in all his novels, and certainly the *Variations* trilogy is an early experiment in the formal arrangement of such "forum" scenes espousing discussions and arguments that are almost entirely political in nature (Wright 2002, 104). In *Sweet and Sour Milk*, Loyaan ends up in long discussions with Margaritta about the regime, about African history, and about the tentacles of the Cold War over Somalia. In *Sardines*, the host of women characters end up in conversations about the fate of their friends and family with special emphasis on societal institutions, a range of literary works that Medina is reading to her daughter Ubax, as well political events from the recent past. More so than in the previous two novels, it is in *Close Sesame* that these debates and conversations take the form of an intricate narrative structure that weave in microhistories, smaller and lesser known events that tend to bolster, layer, and magnify the larger historical canvas of the Cold War in Somalia. The first two novels do contain microstories as well and while some may amplify and expand upon a historical event of the past, it is *Close Sesame* in particular that features an elderly protagonist Deeriye whose dislocated memory and flashbacks into national history allow for an enlarged and kaleidoscopic historiography of Somalia to emerge. Discussions about the law, the role of Islam and the current nature of resistance are punctuated by Deeriye's hallucinatory reunions with his dead wife Nadifa, all of which let a rich Somali

historical past to be stitched into the structure of a novel that unveils the final act of the resistance to the dictatorship.

Having played a significant role in the making of Somali history, the sixty-nine year old Deeriye is perceived as a local hero and a living legend. Yet his mind is slipping and his half-conscious, asthmatic state allows for a fragmented and twilit narration of the days gone by. “Deeriye is a man surrounded by both history as contained in the deeds of men and history as the sum-total of our aspirations, our dreams, our frustrations, and our fears” (Mnthali 2002, 189). Straddling these complex individual and collective imperatives, Deeriye flashes back and forth into the history of the legendary King Wiil-Waal of Jigjiga to the Dervish war against British colonialism and during the time of Italian fascist occupation with some passages reserved for a microhistory of the anticolonial leader Sayeed Mohamed Abdulle Hassan. Additionally, he listens to cassettes of Sayyid’s poetry with several stanzas reproduced in the original Somali in the novel, a habit that harkens back to Deeriye’s longing for oral poetry that “was central to social deliberation” in the nomadic, pastoral days (Moolla 2014, 130). In a beautiful passage, Farah observes that for Deeriye “[t]ime was the photograph whose future print would read like an illuminated manuscript: rather like a negative with which depressions and dark spots, something reminiscent of an X-rayed lung while coughing, while wheezing: one person’s conditioned asthma. Time was history: and history consisted of these illuminated prints—not truths...” (Farah 2006a, 104). The past thus directly reflects on and confronts the present time, and attempts perhaps to even offer resistance strategies to the younger characters involved in an underground dissent movement. Deeriye is nostalgic for his revolutionary old days and is not quite able to reckon with the Cold War’s newly knit web of global power and its direct resonances upon the dictatorship in Somalia.

Ambivalence about the Cold War develops simultaneously with the moral allegories as well as with the forum/debate scenes. The critique of communist USSR and the ways in which the General adopts Soviet methods and behaviors runs through the entire trilogy. Yet there is no valorization of the American side either. These characters are also intellectually rigorous and tend to embody a “cosmopolitan, performative subjectivity” (Moolla 2014, 8). In their performance of cosmopolitanism and worldliness, these characters remain politically and intellectually sophisticated about how the Cold War moves through Africa and also their own country. While the USSR is critiqued heavily due to its direct influence on Somalia, their own engagement with the Cold War-birtherd transnational travel and intellectual references is much more nuanced and complex. Farah admits to being personally invested in an intellectual comprehension of the events at stake. When I asked if he was aware of the long arm of the superpowers, he responded that he became aware of them

elsewhere, while living in England and Italy. Similarly the characters in the trilogy have a better awareness of the political forces in their country perhaps due to their distance from it brought about by travel abroad, multilingualism and the particularity of their reading lists. Farah explains:

Looking back on it, I think that once the intellectual, ideological battles were drawn, then you had the prescriptive readings that came with each opposing group. Then there were the 1968 students' movements, the socialist international groupings that played their part; the Unita festivals. One read Sartre, Camus and Gramsci; one read Marcuse, Susan Brownmiller, Audre Lorde, Paolo Freire, de Beauvoir, etc. These characters that you mention belong to that era and they read these and similar authors.

(quoted in Shringarpure 2019b, 5).

The characters were thus schooled in the precise radical, resistance literature canon of the day and while opposing the Cold War in the form that it took in Somalia, they were not shielded from the ideological and cerebral ping-pong that was typical in those decades. Paradoxically, the prescriptive left-leaning readings from Marxist, socialist and communist writers became an intellectual crux for characters attempting to overturn a dictatorship that pretended to uphold the socialist and communist doctrines, deepening the tone of ambivalence that pervades the trilogy. It is thus important to take this ambivalence seriously and to read it contrapuntally because it becomes a bulwark against the binaristic, lopsided historiographies of the Cold War. In an early memoir essay, Farah speaks of being forced to do the work of writing for or against the Barre regime and that he “did not want to allow either camp to penetrate my awareness” (Farah 2002, 8). If Farah's trilogy is one of the first detailed explorations of the Cold War's African adventures, then these ambivalences illustrate that being caught in the crossfire between the two superpowers was a curse out of which there was no easy escape or resolution.

A final, almost Lukácsian historiographic intervention facilitated by Farah is the special attention and agency granted to characters that espouse an outsider or marginalized status. While the cosmopolitan, exilic Somali existing outside provincially drawn borders of the nation certainly classifies as such, I am referring to the misfits that abound the texts. These include the apolitical dentist Loyaan thrust into the tumult of an unfolding national intrigue; several women characters in *Sardines* cast out by the dictatorship and placed on the margins of the nation; the old, feeble and semi-senile Deeriye with a somewhat shaky memory; the madman Khalife, “a former highly-placed civil servant who one night simply becomes a madman” (Hawley 2002, 84); and finally, children characters also abound in the trilogy with Ubax in *Sardines*, the young boy Samawade, and his sister Scheherzade named after the legendary

storyteller in *Close Sesame*. With official histories completely controlled by the surveillance state of the dictatorship, Farah insists on a cast of characters that due to their outsider status become far more truthful and morally reliable resources for the readers. These somewhat marginalized characters allow for history to emerge from an alternative standpoint. Caught in the web of the dictatorship, these characters are made to discover the manipulations of the Cold War through the various personal and political crises they become embroiled in.

In conclusion, it becomes imperative to return to Said's ideas of contrapuntal reading. He writes that "By looking at the different experiences contrapuntally, as making up a set of what I call intertwined and overlapping histories, I shall try to formulate an alternative both to a politics of blame and to the even more destructive politics of confrontation and hostility" (Said 1994, 18). The Cold War and the immensity of its influence in Somalia indeed births a politics of blame, confrontation, and hostility. Yet Farah does the work of salvaging the nuance of Somali history from the grip of a Cold War framework through literature. He has said that he wrote to salvage truths from a plurality of truths that were invented during this time and that this trilogy was part of the work whose overall theme was "Truth Vs Untruth" (Farah 2002, 13). About *Variations*, he has declared that "[d]uring this period, whenever anyone asked me why I wrote the kind of books I did, I answered that I wrote to put down on paper, for posterity's sake, the true history of a nation" (Farah 2002, 13). The trilogy is the journey of eleven members of an underground resistance movement and the damning personal and political costs of their resistance activities. Along the way, Farah finds a way to create a polyphonic, literary narrative of Somali history. The individual journeys narrated in the trilogy illustrate Farah's emphatic proclamation: "What if I argue that truth must be 'spoke' whether in the privacy of one's chambers or in the presence of others? What if I argue that it must be given a body, a physical existence, that truth must be clothed in the bodied concepts of words, of motions—so that others may share it, challenge it or accept it?" (Farah 2002, 11–12) It is precisely through this staunch commitment to giving truth a shape and a body that Farah does the work of history in his novels. In my analysis, I have made clear that the truthful history of Somalia as written by Farah could only be articulated by thwarting the binaristic, oppositional, and polarizing framework of Cold War geopolitics. To that end, Farah beautifully and comprehensively illustrates that Somalia was caught in the forces of Cold War, and that his novels become site of contest between history and literature that reflect a writer's imperative to pen a contrapuntal, revisionist, and counter history of Somalia and the Cold War through fiction. Along the way, there emerge a host of imaginative and speculative historiographic sites that privilege an ethos of ideological ambivalence but also of rectitude and truth telling.

Notes

- 1 See Popescu 2020, Chapter 2, “Aesthetic World-Systems: Mythologies of Modernism and Realism”; Scott-Smith and Lerg 2017.
- 2 See Saunders, 2000; Wilford, 2009.
- 3 See Popescu and Shringarpure 2019.
- 4 See Westad, 2007.
- 5 See Shringarpure, 2019a.
- 6 See Venter, 2017.

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Part IV

Spectacular Performances



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16 Choreographing Ideology: On the Ballet Adaptation of Peter Abrahams' *The Path of Thunder* in the Soviet Union¹

Anton Povzner, Samuel Barnai, and Louise Bethlehem

Coloured South African writer Peter Abrahams' 1954 autobiography, *Tell Freedom*, speaks of the young Abrahams' encounter in Johannesburg with foundational works of African American literature including W.E.B. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* and Alain Locke's *The New Negro* (1954, 192–194).² “Something burst deep inside me,” Abrahams recalls. “The world could never again belong to white people only! Never again” (1954, 194). This emblematic moment is often marshalled in evidence of the transnational dialogues that informed black South African writing of the 1940s and 1950s—and of Abrahams' place within them (Masilela 2004; 2011, 335; Chrisman 2006, 259–261; S. Graham 2013, 209; Robolin 2012, 87; 2015, 58, see also 33–38, 57–59). South African literary scholarship has identified the “black Atlantic” as a major paradigm within which to explore such exchanges, albeit not without reservations (see Masilela 1996; Masemola 2004; Chrisman 2006; S. Graham 2013; Thorpe 2018). Incontestably however, Abrahams' own movements following his departure from South Africa in 1939 flesh out black Atlantic itineraries, passing through London and Paris, then circling back to Johannesburg, before eventually ending in Coyoba, Jamaica, where Abrahams lived from 1956 until his death in 2017. The scholarly consensus is adamant: neither the history of the New African movement in South Africa nor of mid-twentieth-century pan-Africanism can adequately be narrated without him.

Without detracting from Peter Abrahams' importance within these configurations, this chapter tracks the cultural itineraries generated around his 1948 novel, *The Path of Thunder*, in the Soviet Union whose communist ideology Abrahams both admired and repudiated—much like his ally, former Comintern member and pan-Africanist, the Trinidadian George Padmore, before him. The South African's failure to belong to the Communist Party did not go unremarked.³ However, his status as only the second black South African to have published novels in

English; his poignant condemnation of a racist society born out of the Western colonial project (Shubin and Traikova 2008, 989–990; Davidson and Filatova 2010, 282); his association with Padmore and with pan-Africanist politics more broadly, all paved the way for the massive dissemination of *The Path of Thunder* in the Soviet Union. One of the first works by a black South African to reach Soviet readers, it circulated on an unprecedented scale beginning with its initial Russian translation in 1949 and was steadily republished in multiple languages until the eventual dissolution of the Soviet Union.⁴ Although the initial appearance of the novel predates the accelerated wave of translation of African texts associated with later phases of Soviet support for liberation struggles in Africa,⁵ the Russian foreword to the first edition of the novel makes a point of denouncing purportedly civilized “English capitalists” who carry out “shameless colonial politics” (Kornilova 1951, 3).⁶ It elaborates on the history of South Africa, using an explicitly Marxist analysis to tie racial oppression to economic exploitation. The Marxist framing is optimistic, linking the October Revolution to the nascent anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa (Kornilova 1951, 3–4) and foreshadowing later Soviet support for the South African liberation movements.

The Path of Thunder commands renewed attention on the part of scholars interested in transnational approaches to South African literature, as well as those interested in Cold War cultural history more generally, thanks to its truly extraordinary trail of dissemination in Soviet space. In its unfamiliar Soviet setting, the novel rivals better-known examples of the “hypercanonical” South African literary text: a category that Andrew van der Vlies has deployed very effectively in relation to the iconic status that Alan Paton’s *Cry, the Beloved Country* achieved in the West (2006). Yet there is more that can be said here. Like Paton’s novel, Abrahams’ text was frequently adapted across a range of other media, providing evidence not merely for hypercanonicity but also for what Louise Bethlehem has termed “hypertransmission”—a concept that denotes the intensive print circulation of a literary work combined with its resultant adaptation across other media and genres of expressive culture (Bethlehem 2013, 6). Soviet mediations of *The Path of Thunder* included a film, an opera, several dramatic plays, as well as the ballet adaptation dating to the late 1950s.⁷ The latter stands at the center of our analysis here.

Although ballet is commonly perceived as an elite form, it commanded far broader appeal in the Soviet setting. Granted, the origins of Russian ballet lie in aristocratic entertainment. However, Christina Ezrahi documents its transformation in accordance with the larger utopian and pedagogical aspirations of what she terms “the Soviet cultural project” (Ezrahi 2012, 3–4) which made ballet accessible to a broad audience. “By the 1950s,” Ezrahi attests, “the former imperial ballet had

metamorphosed into an intrinsic part of the official pantheon of Soviet achievements” (2012, 61). Ballet, however, does not in itself provide the impetus for this study. Rather, it takes its bearings from a larger research project that recasts apartheid as an apparatus of *transnational cultural production* in Louise Bethlehem’s formulation—a framework with definite consequences for the repositioning of South African history in relation to the Cold War and to decolonization (Bethlehem 2013). Works of anti-apartheid expressive culture in the international public sphere were, Bethlehem has argued, “channelled through local paradigms of reception in taut negotiation with aesthetic, institutional, linguistic, and political considerations” (Bethlehem 2018, 50). Drawing on the “cultural turn” in Cold War studies (Griffith 2001) and on recent transnational approaches to South African literary studies, she deploys the semiotic “restlessness” of dissident South African cultural formations in order better to integrate South African cultural history into the historiography of the Cold War and of decolonization (Bethlehem 2013; 2018). The ballet adaptation of Abrahams’ *Path of Thunder* provides a riveting opportunity to track such itineraries and iterations. It constitutes a particularly engaging “site of contest,” to use the terminology of this collection, where processes of ideological appropriation attuned to Cold War geopolitics stand revealed as they augment, downplay, or sometimes fully erase the South African specificity of Peter Abrahams’ original narrative.

Conditions of Wild Violence

The project of adapting Peter Abrahams’ text for ballet was initiated by librettist Yuri Slonimsky at the suggestion of younger artists (Slonimsky 1967, 153) and was realized in collaboration with Gara Garayev, a major Soviet composer of Azerbaijani nationality (Mikheeva and Kenigsberg 2004, 220),⁸ together with Konstantin Sergeyev, a prominent and highly acclaimed choreographer and dancer at the Kirov State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet (now Mariinsky Theater) in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg)—the USSR’s second most important ballet institution (Prokhorov 1974, 238). A first critically acclaimed staging at the Kirov Theatre in 1958 preceded performances at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow in 1959 (Karagicheva 1960; Mikheeva and Kenigsberg 2004, 208) and was followed by the inclusion of the ballet in the Bolshoi’s tour of China later that year (Dolgov 1959). Performances followed with astonishing frequency in both major and minor Soviet venues whether in predominantly Russian cities or on the periphery (Goltsman 1985, 200).⁹

For Yuri Slonimsky, the librettist, the ballet portrayed “a backwater corner of the world awakening to struggle under conditions of wild violence” (cited in Garayev 1978, 391). Between 1952 when the idea of the

adaptation was first broached—and rejected—and the eventual staging of the ballet in 1958, the Algerian War of Independence had made questions of African nationalism unavoidable as the *Front de libération nationale* (FLN) adroitly exploited Cold War tensions, including those between the USSR and China, to internationalize its conflict with France in the quest for Algerian independence (see Connelly 2001). Decolonization was very much in the air, as Slonimsky's memoir attests: "Time was on our side. The harsh fate of the peoples of Africa and their growing struggle against colonialism drew increasing interest" (Slonimsky 1967, 158). The anticolonial dimensions of the ballet clearly struck a powerful note within Soviet society. Popular reviewers, biographers and academics alike commented widely on the social cogency of the adaptation, singling out the manner in which it intertwined an individual story of heroic love with the depiction of resistance to imperialism. Fortuitously, the ballet also proved compatible with renewed demands in 1957 on the part of the Ministry of Culture for productions that addressed contemporary topics (Ezrahi 2012, 69). Yet despite a context that was generally attuned to African decolonization, welding Abrahams' original text into a form compatible with hegemonic Soviet expectations with regard to blackness would not leave it unscathed.

First published in February 1948, Peter Abrahams' *The Path of Thunder* depicts an interracial love affair between Lanny Swartz, an educated man of coloured descent, and Sarie Villier, a white Afrikaner woman. Although it was written on the cusp between segregation and apartheid, the novel dramatizes the enduring centrality of the fear of racial mixing for white imaginaries in South Africa (see Blair, 2003; Lucy Graham 2015). Abrahams offers Lanny and Sarie's love affair as a counterweight to the provisions of the 1927 Immorality Act that prohibited "miscegenation" in South Africa, in the terminology of the period. Although the relationship between Sarie and Lanny depicted in the novel is doomed from the start, the exploration of interracial intimacy in *The Path of Thunder* shares significant features with more overtly utopian narratives, to the extent that the interpersonal relationship provides a pretext for contesting the power relations enforced by the dystopian racial regime (Erez 2019, 24–25). Unlike Abrahams' earlier works *Song of the City* (1945) and *Mine Boy* (1946), often understood as overtly Marxist or "proletarian" novels (Michael Wade 1972; 1978),¹⁰ *The Path of Thunder* stands in a clear line of descent from the liberal novel whose subjectivities it problematizes in the fraught South African context (Blair 2012, 480).

Since Western art was frequently attacked by Soviet critics for indulging in apolitical representations of romance, the all-too-individualistic motifs of Abrahams' love story needed to be transformed. Admittedly, the love story of the protagonists would continue to provide Slonimsky with a central scaffold for his adaptation, but it was coupled with two additional

motifs consisting in “a desire to awaken the people [...] in opposition to the plantation-owners (*sic*),” and the portrayal of “the unification of the blacks and the coloureds in defence of the heroes’ love, in the name of the people’s freedom and their right to happiness according to their own choice” (Slonimsky 1967, 157). The librettist proceeded to simplify the plot of *The Path of Thunder*, expunging narrative lines involving two subsidiary interracial relationships and excising the novel’s Jewish characters.¹¹ Slonimsky was fully attuned to the claims of ideology: “The unity of interest of the individual hero and the mass hero prohibits limiting the spectacle to Lanny and Sarie, as it is possible, say, regarding the famous lover heroes of Shakespeare,” he writes. “Alongside them a third hero lives and acts, one who is perhaps the most important these days—the people” (Slonimsky 1967, 156–157).

In a quest for precisely such ideological intensification, Slonimsky experimented with the introduction of new protagonists and antagonists. The patriarchal white Afrikaners of Abrahams’ text are downplayed in the adaptation in favor of labor recruiters who attempt to entice the local coloured community into wage employment with alcohol, woolen blankets, and cheap treats. In initial drafts of the libretto, this development motivated the introduction of a wholly new character in the form of a white activist, Tomas, whose role it would be to oppose the recruiters and to “teach Lanny and Sarie to fight for the black masses” (Slonimsky 1967, 162).¹² When Garayev and Sergeyev both opposed including a figure whom Sergeyev bluntly termed the “red agitator” (Vaganova 2011, 124), Slonimsky abandoned this direction. However, its residues are clearly discernible in the concluding act of the adaptation, tellingly renamed “Struggle” in contrast with Abrahams’ original “Hate.” During the final moments of the ballet, blacks and coloureds march together in protest against the violence of labor recruitment, fists raised in revolutionary ferment. Slonimsky would eventually express regret for this departure from Abrahams’ text, speaking in favor of a more “timeless” approach instead. All the same, his defense of the militant climax of the adaptation as preferable to Abrahams’ “pessimism” (1967, 161) chimes with the emphasis on armed struggle as the most efficient path to achieve socialism that characterized Soviet doctrine of the 1950s—a doctrine that would have lasting consequences for the Communist Party in South Africa as well as for the African National Congress more broadly (see Filatova 2012, 514).¹³

Ostensibly, the ballet’s militant climax reflected Slonimsky’s intent to bring the action of the ballet closer to the more pronounced phase of political resistance to the South African government that was associated with the Defiance Campaign in South Africa during the mid-1950s, rather than reflecting the pre-apartheid setting of the original novel (Slonimsky 1967, 161). Yet Slonimsky failed quite spectacularly to grasp the singularity of apartheid. His offhanded reference to the Afrikaner

farmers of Abrahams' text as "plantation-owners" (1967, 157) projects the North American regime of chattel slavery onto the South African setting, even to the point that Slonimsky allowed himself to imagine the "monotonous [hand motions] of the cotton pickers" as he reflected on his text (1967, 165).¹⁴ Of course, throughout the twentieth century, South Africa and the U.S. "have functioned imaginatively and rhetorically as powerful geopolitical frames of reference for each other," as Robolin appositely notes (2010, 128). However, in light of Maxim Matusevich's work on black diasporas in the Soviet Union, we would argue that the conflation of *plaas* with plantation reveals a particularly Soviet overlay.¹⁵ Matusevich points to "two distinctly different migratory waves" of diasporic black subjects to the USSR, contrasting the largely African American and Caribbean migrants of 1920s and 1930s with those hailing from the independent African States who traveled to the USSR *en masse* during the 1960s and 1970s in search of the educational opportunities afforded by the communist regime (Matusevich 2008, 55). The ballet adaptation of *The Path of Thunder* thus falls on the cusp between rival conceptions of blackness. The first, rooted in an imaginary dating from the first decades following the Bolshevik revolution, bolstered claims to a (putatively) "colourblind internationalism" as "one of the cornerstones of new Soviet identity" in Matusevich's words (2008, 55). The second derives from later Soviet encounters with African students who were often overtly critical of Soviet racism, and who manifested cultural and political dispositions that challenged Soviet society (Matusevich 2008, 69, 71–73). African students were particularly visible in the context of the 1957 Youth Festival in Moscow, an event emblematic of Khrushchev's post-Stalinist cultural "thaw" which may well have brought segments of the ballet's projected audience into contact with African ethnic diversity for the first time. The anachronism of the adaptation's African American-derived constructs of blackness stands in curious contrast with contingent local developments during the period in question. Just as the ballet premiered in 1958 so as to decry Western intolerance of interracial love, Soviet attitudes to the so-called "children of the festival"—an "alleged cohort of biracial children born to Soviet women after the festival" (Roth-Ey 2004, 75)—themselves reflected widespread prejudice against biracial subjects (Karpov 2007).

Improper Company

In a comparable fashion, Garayev's score oscillates between competing constructs of blackness in the Soviet imaginary of the times. Like Slonimsky, who consulted the Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Ethnography in order to extend his knowledge of contemporary Africa (1967, 160), and Sergeyev, who consulted the Institute of Oriental Studies for information on the everyday life, customs and ritual dance of

South African peoples (Mikheeva and Kenigsberg 2004, 227), Garayev conducted extensive research into African music before beginning his composition, basing himself partly on the ethnographic recordings of the Leningrad State Museum of Ethnography (Karagicheva 1969, 165). These preparations, Soviet ethnomusicologist Ludmila Karagicheva attests, were so thorough that the composer spent more time on them than on the actual score. It was, Karagicheva pronounces, “possibly the first major Soviet engagement with African music (1969, 164). Garayev did not focus on a single musical tradition but distilled what Karagicheva terms the “typical devices and consistent patterns of musical speech, [and] stable norms of African modal thinking” (1969, 164–165). These devices were combined with motifs deriving from African American and Cuban sources. All the same, one particularly charged source of inspiration was conspicuous in its absence: jazz. Given rigidly hierarchical hegemonic conceptions of art in Soviet society, modern forms such as jazz were deemed “not simply inferior but degenerate and decadent,” Penny Von Eschen reminds us (2006, 95; see also Ritter 2017, 54–55). “Enjoying wide acceptance in the 1920s,” she writes, jazz was driven underground during the purges of the 1930s, revived again in the more tolerant years of World War II, only to be officially proscribed with the renewed clampdowns of the Cold War; many jazz musicians were arrested and sent to labor camps during the repression of the late Stalin years” (Von Eschen, 2006, 94). But the cultural diplomacy of the Cold War during the late 1950s was beginning to change this. While the U.S. State Department recruited jazz as emblematic of personal freedom and as a riposte to Soviet allegations concerning racial inequality in the United States, the Soviets cautiously accommodated “symphonic” jazz within the provisions of new cultural exchange agreements while still rejecting modern or “decadent” jazz (Von Eschen, 2006, 94, see 92–120).

This shift had little impact on Garayev who wrote revealingly to Slonimsky that: “It is necessary to handle Negro music of the mid-twentieth century carefully because it was corrupted by various jazz pimps, and if one’s pen quivers slightly, one might find oneself in improper company” (Garayev 1978, 417). Garayev’s recourse to the figure of the “jazz pimp” points once again to an unresolved racism latent in Soviet society—one tightly linked through the evocation of the figure of the “pimp” to illicit sexual exchange. While latent elements of Soviet racism arguably structure Garayev’s response, the Azerbaijani composer writing to a Soviet Jew might have had particular reason to fear “improper company.” Does the adaptation therefore make blackness into the vehicle of dissent for its minoritarian collaborators? Apparently not. Reflecting on his work in the Party plenum, the future Lenin Prize laureate Garayev states that he left the Kremlin as though “[he] could see better, hear sharper, [...] filled with the desire to work, work and work”

(Garayev 1964). If anything, the association of *The Path of Thunder* in hegemonic Soviet culture with Garayev as a minority national could easily be promoted as an example of the egalitarian Soviet “brotherhood of nations” in contradistinction to Western racism (cf. Matyushkin 1954, 53–54). But if Azerbaijan was prey to the same kind of Orientalizing gestures in Soviet discourse as (South) Africa,¹⁶ Garayev’s musical choices reprise rather than repudiate a primitivist acoustic imaginary based on the supposed preeminence of rhythm for African and African American music (see Agawu 1995).¹⁷

Garayev’s omission of jazz motifs from his score further distances it from the South African black milieu it purported to represent. The increasingly rapid urbanization of South African blacks from the 1930s on saw the emergence of an urban proletarian cultural configuration known as *marabi*—a popular music and dance style that emerged on the cusp between local Southern African musical cultures and their African American counterparts (see Coplan 1985; Ballantine 1993). Abrahams’ own immersion in *marabi* culture is reflected in his earlier novels, *Song of the City* and *Mine Boy* (see Jones 2012). The continued flourishing of South African jazz culture during the 1940s and 50s drew partly on its assertion of black urban modernity in an explicitly political refutation of apartheid ideology rooted in the assumption that black South Africans were ill-suited bearers of precisely such modernity (see Ballantine 1993; Coplan 1985; Titlestad 2004). At one level, Garayev’s suspicion of African American jazz blinds him to its fundamental importance for mid-twentieth-century black musicians who used it to challenge their racialization through inserting themselves into “a coeval global field of cultural action,” in Tsitsi Ella Jaji’s phrase (2014, 14), hereby repudiating the primitivism foundational to white supremacist ideologies. To an extent, the polemics surrounding the visit of white jazz clarinetist and bandleader Benny Goodman to the Soviet Union in 1962, a brief four years after the first staging of *Path of Thunder*, offer a mirror image of these dynamics on the American side.¹⁸ Yet at the same time, Garayev’s failure to explore modernist musical traditions in South Africa, indicative of hegemonic Soviet aesthetic and racist prejudices, aligns him with apartheid’s own repudiation of musical modernism. The strains of black South African jazz music that unfold in defiance of apartheid ideology quite simply fail to carry into the Soviet cultural arena.

Soviet cultural production during the Cold War was highly regulated and blatantly statist. The history of the ballet adaptation of Abrahams’ *The Path of Thunder* shows it to be no exception. At the same time, it is worth observing that statist cultural interventions are not devoid of “socio-cultural complexity,” as Jay Straker has argued in the context of post-independence Guinea (2009, 8).¹⁹ The negotiations around the adaptation of *The Path of Thunder* shed light on the complex status of

blackness in the Soviet imaginary that predated the Cold War as well as on its contingent Cold War entanglements. Curiously, the processes of what might loosely be called cultural deterritorialization and re-territorialization associated with Garayev, Sergeyev and Slonimsky's adaptation of coloured South African Abrahams' text obscure rather than clarify its provenance. Jacques Derrida memorably once commented on "apartheid" as a "unique appellation" for the singularity of the South African regime, claiming that it denied translation (1985, 291). It is emblematic of the erasure of the South African specificity of *The Path of Thunder* that while Soviet functionaries similarly leave "apartheid" untranslated, the archive accessed in our research barely ever makes use of the word. Then again, the archive is capable of offering up alternate afterimages, so to speak. A poster for the 1956 Russian film adaptation of *The Path of Thunder* by Seraphima Roshal juxtaposes an image of the blond Sarie in the upper right hand corner of the frame with that of Lanny, situated beneath her and to the left. The woman's lips are bright red—a motif repeated in the color of Lanny's tie. Against the predominantly dark background of the poster, his white collar echoes the pallor of Sarie's face. The interplay of black, white, and red is clearly allegorical, encoding the political communities that the film references. But a second look at the poster shows that its economy of representation is based on a sleight of hand. In the film version, as in the ballet itself, black and coloured South Africans were played *in blackface*. The overlay of stage paint that simultaneously proclaims and simultaneously denies its artifice, neatly concretizes the volatile stakes of cultural translation surrounding Soviet appropriations of Abrahams' novel.

Notes

- 1 The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP/2007–2013)/ERC Grant Agreement no. 615564.
- 2 The term "coloured" in South Africa is used to designate people of mixed racial ancestry.
- 3 Abrahams saw communism as an insufficient response to racism (2000, 45) and the vocation of writing as "incompatible with membership of any serious political party which demanded strict adherence to its principles" (2000, 60). He was dismissed as sub-editor on *The Daily Worker*, the organ of the British Communist Party, because he was not a party member (58–60). Padmore features prominently in Abrahams' *roman à clef*, *A Wreath for Udomo* (1956). In an interview with the Foreign Commission of the Writers Union of the USSR, the South African Jewish communist writer Phyllis Altman was questioned whether Abrahams was "anticommunist"—and was recorded as cautiously assenting (Altman 1957, 25–26).
- 4 We want to thank Byron Sherman for assisting us in locating more than 30 editions of the work, the latest of which dates to 1986. See the online bibliography at: <https://scholars.huji.ac.il/ercapartheid/publications/bibliographies>.

- Millions of Soviet students were exposed to it during the course of their English-language education (Davidson and Filatova 2010, 281). It appears likely that the four Chinese printings followed in the wake of this massive Soviet circulation.
- 5 A Soviet translator reports on 7,652,000 copies of books by authors from twenty African countries published in 1964; a bibliography covering 1958–1964 lists nearly two thousand works by African authors (Ramzes 1966, 42; Zand and Elvova, 1967). These figures are not necessarily a reliable index of reception since the Soviet regime disbursed money in accordance with ideological preferences rather than economic ones. In other words, the state-subsidized publication system functioned independently of direct relations between demand and the number of copies published. We thank Monica Popescu for this insight.
 - 6 All translations from the Russian are by Anton Lahaie and Samuel Barnai.
 - 7 The most noteworthy entries here are in film, opera and ballet. Film: *Ampropi arahetov (Path of Thunder)*. 1956. Directors: Erasm Karamyan, Stepan Kevorkov. Writers: Serafima Roshal, L. Makeyeva. (Armenian/Russian). Opera: *Reiter der Nacht (Night Rider)*. 1973. Composer: Hermann Meyer. Libretto by Günter Deicke. First performance November 1973, East Berlin, Deutsche Staatsoper. Ballet: libretto by Yuri Slonimsky, music by Gara Garayev and choreography by Konstantin Sergeyeve; premiered at the Kirov Leningrad Theatre in 1958.
 - 8 Gara Garayev is addressed as Kara Karayev in Russian texts. By the time of his collaboration with Slonimsky on *The Path of Thunder*, Garayev had to his credit a number of major musical works, often drawing on Azerbaijani traditions, including an earlier ballet collaboration with Slonimsky.
 - 9 A recent bibliography contains references to upwards of 30 productions, major as well as minor, across the USSR over the course of two decades (Takhirov 2008, 196–234). A substantial revision of plot and musical score was undertaken for performance in Baku in 1974—evidence of the persistent resonance of the ballet (Karagicheva 1974). Garayev’s music for *The Path of Thunder* remains available in recent recordings including the Ostankino Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra (1993), the Moscow State Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra (2011), and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (2013).
 - 10 For a critique of this position that sees *Mine Boy* as articulating “*radical populist liberalism*,” see Jean-Philippe Wade (1990, 99; emphasis in original).
 - 11 This omission parallels the omission of the Jewish characters in some of the novel’s translations and may be correlated with the virulence of Soviet antisemitism towards the end of Stalin’s rule when Slonimsky, himself a Jew, was working on the libretto. However, proposals for the film version filed around the same time by Serafima Roshal, also of Jewish descent, do not perform this excision. See Roshal 1954.
 - 12 Megan Jones points to Abrahams’ admiration for the Trotskyist South African labor organizer Max Gordon who successfully negotiated a pay-rise for unskilled black workers in 1938. Gordon served as the basis for Abrahams’ character Paddy or “Red”—the protagonists’ Irish foreman on the mines in the earlier novel, *Mine Boy*. Jones rightly points to the manner in which Abrahams’ character “occludes the paternalistic realities of white involvement in black politics” (2012, 213). Slonimsky’s proposal is far more overtly racist in its foreclosure of autonomous black political agency.
 - 13 In the highly regulated sphere of Soviet cultural production, the overwriting of Peter Abrahams’ original text is not wholly unexpected. At the same time, the very element that served ideological heightening during the late 1950s

would itself be the subject of subsequent revision. Karagicheva, speaking of a 1974 Azerbaijani production, tells us that the scenes involving labor recruitment have been removed. An anonymous review of the same production, tellingly titled “The second birth of a ballet,” attests to the fact that libretto, choreography and Garayev’s score itself were substantially altered in order to avoid the “mechanical repetition” of the original ballet in the face of radically changed social and political relations on the African continent.

- 14 “Plantation-owners” recur in a range of responses to the ballet, from newspaper articles to professional artistic publications (Gabovich 1958; Ilupina 1959; Karagicheva 1960, 164; 1974; Krasovskaya 1961). An even more unmistakable American projection is found in a study of Garayev’s ballets, where Sarie and Lanny meet their fate at the hands of “bestial Klansmen” (Bonch-Osmolovskaya 1961, 86).
- 15 The *plaas*, or farm in Afrikaans, is a foundational locus of South African literature in ways that cannot be detailed here but see Coetzee 1986; Wenzel 2000; Olivier 2012.
- 16 Soviet hegemonic perceptions of the minority nationalities of the Caucasus, including of Azerbaijani, were not unlike Western stereotypes of the African as uneducated, primitive, and passion-driven; in fact, Caucasian peoples were commonly addressed as “black” or “dark” (though distinct from the Soviet imaginary of Africans as such).
- 17 The Soviet musicologist Karagicheva remarks of Garayev’s score: “however far removed from each other stylistically the folk musical traditions of Azerbaijan and Africa, there is something in common in their metro-rhythmics” (1969, 171).
- 18 Von Eschen points out that the “battle over tradition versus innovation in jazz that broke out during the tour rivalled Cold War hostilities in intensity” precisely because they subsumed issues of race (2006, 92; see also 101–102).
- 19 Rather than see state agency as “purely *prohibitive*,” Straker stresses a capacity for innovation reflected, for instance, in “the revolutionary state’s most ambitious and transgressive cultural–pedagogical project: youth-mobilized ‘militant theatre’” (2007, 208; emphasis in original).

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17 “It’s like inviting Pinochet to the Fourth of July”: The Chilean Ship *Esmeralda* and Intersecting Spectacles in the Global Cold War

Michelle Carmody

The 1974 cruise of the Chilean naval training ship *The Esmeralda*, its first following the September 11, 1973 coup that brought General Augusto Pinochet to power, was unusual. The ship sailed annually as a training cruise for newly graduated naval officers, but this time the ship also carried gifts and documentation “designed to clarify points regarding the Chilean reality,” endowing it with the additional function of operating as a “true embassy of promotion and publicity about our country.” As the Naval Commander in Chief José Marino Castro, Pinochet’s second in command, said to the crew as it departed, they were to “show the Chilean reality in each of the countries we visit, leaving an admirer of our land in every friendly port we pass” (Concha 1974, 672). The ship’s voyage aimed to contest the image that Chile had acquired since the coup, rehabilitating the country in the eyes of the international public. It was not, however, entirely successful in this endeavor. As an attempt at fostering international relations, the ship was dependent on accessing audiences willing to absorb its message. The political context of the late Cold War meant that authoritarian Chile was seen as a global pariah, attracting protests that challenged Pinochet’s version of the Chilean reality. As a result, access to audiences depended on the help of mediators, who were also pursuing their own objectives.

The terrain of culture has become a key feature of recent examinations of the Cold War in Latin America (Joseph 2019). The Cold War featured multiple spectacles which worked to “engender and control a viewing public through the performance of national identity, traditions and goals” and thereby institute their ideal vision of social order (Taylor 1997, ix). Actors on both the right and the left tried to win the hearts and minds of the public, both domestic and international. In Chile, for example, Pinochet expended significant effort domestically attempting to shape collective memory of the period before his military coup as one

characterized by disorder and chaos, as opposed to the order and stability that his own regime represented (Stern 2006). As the example of the *Esmeralda* shows, the regime also attempted to communicate with an international viewing public, transmitting a narrative around the place of Chile within the modern capitalist world the Cold War was being waged to protect.

Looking at the use of spectacle in neighboring Argentina, Diana Taylor argues for an appreciation of “both the local cultural specifics of national dramas *and* the way that national and international spectacles interface and produce each other” (1997, xi). If the Cold War can be characterized as “a matrix of international exchanges” (Bystrom 2012, 2), then the cultural Cold War must also be seen in the same way: a series of spectacles that intersected with each other, both amplifying and transforming the original message. The ability of authoritarian actors from the global South like Pinochet to engage in cultural diplomacy and thereby claim their place in an imagined international community that would, they hoped, emerge victorious from this Cold War was dependent on navigating these intersections and interactions.

In the case of the *Esmeralda*, interfacing with other Cold War spectacles provided increased access to audiences, something Pinochet desperately needed, particularly in the West, where protest movements contested the story the regime tried to tell about itself. At the same time, it recast this story within the narrative being disseminated through the international spectacle. This led to the *Esmeralda* failing to convey the Chilean reality, as Pinochet understood it—demonstrating the degree to which cultural diplomacy is subject to the same political pressures and dynamics as its more conventional diplomatic cousin.

This chapter starts by reading the *Esmeralda* for what it tells us about Pinochet’s understanding of the Chilean Cold War. The ship spoke to two different audiences, communicating the two key elements of this understanding. To domestic audiences the *Esmeralda* communicated Pinochet’s vision of his regime as putting an end to the long-running national drama characterized by the political struggles and upheavals of the entire twentieth century and returning to the stability and order of the late nineteenth century. To international audiences, it communicated Pinochet’s vision for Chile’s future, a part of the modern, capitalist world. The chapter then looks at how these efforts at communicating with international audiences were shaped by the broader political context of the late Cold War. The ship was warmly welcomed at numerous sites across the globe such as El Salvador and South Africa, intersecting with the desire of these other regimes, generally fellow right-wing ones, to perform the international dimension of their own Cold War struggles. But the ship struggled to gain access to audiences in the West, particularly as protestors seized upon the *Esmeralda*’s visits to contest the meaning of Pinochet’s regime.

As the chapter then shows, this changed when a series of opportunities presented themselves to intersect with the U.S.' own Cold War. The U.S. was engaged in its own struggle for the hearts and minds of the international public. This struggle took the form of "commemorative diplomacy," defined by Bennett as events that work to "recall the histories that people share in an effort to strengthen the affective bonds that underwrite such imagined international communities as bilateral alliances or multilateral organizations" (2016, 699). This gave Chileans the opportunity to assert their connection to the U.S., but it also came at a price. Intersecting cultural Cold Wars allowed for the expression of common goals; the trade-off, however, was a displacement of agency and voice onto these private actors, who were ultimately more concerned with ensuring the integrity of their own celebrations rather than defending Chile against increasing human rights charges. Ultimately it shows how the ability of authoritarian projects to compete for the hearts and minds of the international public was dependent on the dynamics of the different national and international dramas being played out across the globe.

The *Esmeralda* and the Long Chilean Cold War

For Pinochet, the Cold War he was fighting was one of defending Western, Christian civilization against Communist expansionism. This was a *longue durée* struggle, "a further stage in the same conflict that erupted into the Spanish Civil War" (Weld 2018, 78). At the same time, Pinochet also positioned himself as the inheritor of a distinctly Chilean national political heritage. The nineteenth century was held up by Pinochet and his peers as one removed from mass politics and the resulting political mobilizations and instabilities that, in their view, had plagued the twentieth century, culminating in the Allende regime and in the near-destruction of Chilean society (Bawden 2016, 2). September 11, 1973, the day of the coup that brought Pinochet to power, marked the end of this phase in the Long Chilean Cold War and the return to the glory of the previous century (Rouquié 1987, 52–53; Stern 2006, 34, 67–70).

The *Esmeralda* offered the chance to reacquaint audiences with the connection between the military and this glorious national past. The ship that sailed under Pinochet was a reconstruction of an earlier version connected to two key moments from the nineteenth century, the War of the Pacific and the Battle of Iquique, which was commemorated in Naval Glory Day. Both invoked a national guardianship role of the Chilean armed forces, mythologizing them as the defenders of the fatherland (Rouquié, 1987, 62; Sater 1986, 2–3). Pinochet's *Esmeralda* was the sixth ship to carry the original's name and likeness and did so specifically to evoke the "values of courage and sacrifice for the Patria (homeland)" on

the part of the Chilean navy (Armada de Chile 2014). By entrusting it with the task of operating as a floating embassy, the Pinochet regime used the *Esmeralda* to communicate the message, both at home and abroad, that the military represented salvation from this extended history of destabilization and threat to the integrity of the Chilean nation-state.

At the same time as conveying the national dimensions of Pinochet's Cold War, the *Esmeralda* was also mobilized to represent the broader claims to defending and being a part of Western civilization. This function was made all the more urgent by the failure of traditional diplomacy to secure Chilean acceptance in the international community. Very soon after taking power key figures within the regime realized that it was facing international isolation, largely as a result of human rights pressures within international forums like the United Nations (UN). The first response to this isolation was to go on the offensive and accuse their detractors of being part of an international Marxist plot. This approach, however, was criticized even by Chile's fellow authoritarian neighbors in Brazil, whose UN representatives found it "extremely aggressive" and "counterproductive" (Harmer 2012, 678). Cultural diplomacy such as that practiced through the *Esmeralda's* voyages offered the potential to counterbalance these mistakes by communicating a more positive narrative about Chilean order and progress.

The Esmeralda's International Voyages

This narrative of Chilean order and progress spoke to a future no longer encumbered by the upheavals of the twentieth century. In its first Pinochet-era sailing, a 1974 "goodwill tour" of the Pacific, the ship left the port of Valparaiso stocked with copies of a full-color booklet prepared especially by the Ministry of Exterior Relations, more than 100 pages detailing in both Spanish and English the national economy, the state of the mining and agricultural sectors, and the "Chilean reality" since the September 1973 coup. Designed to be distributed to the public during the planned "open ship" events, where members of the public could board and tour the vessel at the various ports of call, it introduced the world to the military government, with color photos of the key figures in the new regime and the declaration it issued on the day of the coup. In its presentation of Chile's industrial capabilities, it contrasted the nation's potential, and the military regime's desire to see it reach that potential, with the sad state of industrial and agricultural development and output during the preceding three years. The chaos under Allende necessitated the disciplined approach to the economy and production that had now been instated under military tutelage (Armada de Chile 1974).

With its comprehensive overview of both the industrial capacities and the cultural and social characteristics of Chile, the booklet encouraged

investment and reassured international audiences that Chile was indeed a part of the modern capitalist West. It told of the support that the Junta received from the Chilean people in its efforts to rid society of foreign, Marxist-Leninist elements and return it to “nationalistic and Christian” values that, at the same time, were “dynamically compatible with advances made in contemporary science, technology and education.” The story being told about the Chilean reality in the materials carried by the *Esmeralda* spoke specifically to a richer, Western audience with the capacity for investment and economic partnerships.

The goodwill cruise brought this message about Chile to a range of publics up the west coast of the Americas, and out into the Pacific. The ship was warmly received in Ecuador and El Salvador, where the military regimes of both countries organized official welcome events with military parades and invited a delegation from the ship for an audience with the Presidents General Rodriguez Lara and Colonel Armando Molina, respectively. It also held open ship events in both countries (Concha 1974). These two authoritarian regimes embraced the Chilean ship, whose visit allowed them to perform their own spectacle, demonstrating to a domestic audience their membership in an international community.

This desire to perform membership in an international community on the part of the ship’s hosts shaped the voyages it made. Fellow authoritarian regimes were the principal ones to enthusiastically engage with Chile and welcome the *Esmeralda* unreservedly. South Africa in particular was keen to develop ties, an attempt to break out of the diplomatic isolation it had been placed in as a result of the international condemnation of apartheid. In 1974 the Chief of the Chilean Navy, Admiral Toribio Merino Castro, received an overwhelmingly positive response from the South African Defense Force attaché stationed in Santiago when asked if his country would be open to a visit by the ship the following year (SANDF 1974). The enthusiasm was mutual, with the Chileans inviting the South Africans to join the *Esmeralda*’s crew on one of its training cruises with the aim of “strengthening even more the sincere bonds of friendship and cooperation that characterize our armed forces” (SANDF 1975). The Chilean desire to build an international network of allies interfaced with the South African, facilitating the *Esmeralda*’s international voyages.

At the same time, however, Chilean goals were complicated by this relationship with authoritarian states. While the warm reception in Ecuador and El Salvador could be used to demonstrate to the Chilean public the good international standing the country enjoyed, these countries were not able to provide the kind of economic and political engagement and support that the ship’s voyages aimed to drum up. Furthermore, these places carried diplomatic baggage. As an internal regime memo noted with reference to South Africa, there was a need to “be careful not to show publicly our ties with this country because of its level of international isolation”

(Horowitz & Sklar 1982, 20). While Chile's representative in Pretoria argued for deepening ties, their ambassador to the UN pushed back, countering that it would be "suicide for a country as internationally weak and harassed as ours" to align itself with such a global pariah (MINREL 1977a). The *Esmeralda* also received warm welcomes in places like South Korea, which it visited in 1975, but this brought the same implications. From 1977 onwards Chilean international relations shifted purposefully towards rehabilitating their international image, starting with making a public break with South Africa (MINREL 1977b).¹

Breaking out of this closed circuit of fellow authoritarian regimes, however, proved challenging. During the 1974 goodwill cruise, the ship had moved northwards to the U.S. after its visit to Central America, taking it beyond the relatively restricted network of fellow authoritarian regimes. Within the democratic and politically plural setting of the U.S., the *Esmeralda's* reception varied dramatically depending on the political position of those presiding over the reception. While some city and state officials and organizations welcomed the ship, it also sailed directly into conflict with the Chilean solidarity movement, which had emerged in response to the violence unleashed by the Pinochet regime. The movement organized protests and blockades that met the ship and ensured that it was not able to access audiences as planned, and pressured other authorities to revoke the ship's invitation. While the *Esmeralda* did manage to engage with the U.S. public, participating in official city-sponsored events for the Fourth of July celebrations in Portland, protests in San Francisco meant it had to dock some distance away, at the Alameda Naval Station, where it was placed under tight security and the planned open ship cancelled. The ship's crew persisted in holding a press conference in order to tell their side of the "truth" about Chile, but they were held to account by the press who questioned them over the human rights issue (Concha 1974). Further north in Canada, the ship's invitation to dock in Vancouver was revoked by the city after pressure from the Chilean solidarity movement (Shayne 2009, 101).

Like the *Esmeralda*, the Chile solidarity movement's performance was focused on ports and harbors; the Longshoreman's Union was one of the most active trade unions within the international movement and organized for boycotts on loading and unloading cargo travelling to and from Chile, making ports true sites of contest over both the material and cultural reception of the Pinochet regime (Else 2013; Tinsman 2014). This presented a serious disruption to the plan to use the *Esmeralda* to communicate with international audiences. Protests met the ship in Australia, Japan, Sweden, The Netherlands, and Turkey. In Israel, the government hastily revoked the ship's invitation to dock in Tel Aviv, diverting it to Haifa where it kept a low profile with no open ship or official events in order to avoid planned demonstrations (Amnesty International Newsletter, 1977). The only other European state that

welcomed it was Spain, which remained at the time politically enmeshed in Francoism. While the ship was able to visit authoritarian and small states without it becoming a site of contest over the regime's image, there were significantly fewer opportunities to communicate with the public in larger, more politically and economically powerful countries.

Intersecting Spectacles: *The Esmeralda* and the Cultural Cold War of the United States

Fortunately for the Pinochet regime, a series of opportunities were arising in the U.S. The U.S. government itself was restricted from issuing official welcomes, as a realignment on the part of U.S. liberals who wanted to reformulate their country's image in the wake of Vietnam translated into increased pressure within the Congress over Pinochet's human rights record (Bawden, 2016; Keys 2014). At the same time, however, this very effort at reformulating the country's international image afforded Chile an opening. The *Esmeralda* was warmly welcomed by private actors as part of a series of national celebrations and commemorations that themselves aimed at projecting this renewed vision of the U.S. to both domestic and international audiences. Chile was able to intersect with these spectacles, affording the *Esmeralda* access to a receptive audience and to a set of spokespersons who defended their participation.

In 1976 the *Esmeralda* was slated to take part in the celebrations for the bicentennial of the U.S. Declaration of Independence. The Bicentennial was part of a broader Cold War effort on the part of the U.S. itself to win heart and minds and resuscitate the cultural values of the anti-communist bloc. In the wake of the Vietnam War and Watergate, and with high unemployment and a recession, by the mid-1970s, the image of the U.S. abroad was less than impressive. The mission of the bicentennial was to regain control of the narrative and reassert the basic values and principles that supposedly underpin the great nation of the United States of America: national self-determination, individual freedom, and equality (Bennett, 2016, 700–701; Wulf 2015, 214). The participation of other countries in this effort was crucial: the U.S. realized that it was not in a position to trumpet these values given the events of the recent past, and so it called on others to “participate in a mutual ‘rediscovery of our common roots’” (Bennett 2016, 697). While Chile was not specifically one of the countries that U.S. officials envisaged as playing a major part in this process, this approach provided the Pinochet regime with an opportunity that was sorely needed.

The mediator of the *Esmeralda*'s participation in the commemoration was an organization called Operation Sail. Operation Sail was a private initiative that enjoyed close links with the U.S. government, the Republican Party, and the U.S. business elite: its founding Chair, Emil

Mosbacher Jr., was Chief of Protocol under former president Richard Nixon, while its establishment was supported by the State Department (Operation Sail 1976). Its exclusive focus was the organization of occasional events featuring tall ships from around the world, and for the 1976 bicentennial it planned on bringing these ships to parade through the New York harbor. This event served the public diplomacy goals of the U.S. bicentennial, as well as the broader agenda of the U.S.' cultural Cold War; President Gerald Ford commended it for "bringing together sailing ships from other lands ... [and] emphasizing the international fellowship and goodwill to which we are so totally committed" (Operation Sail 1976).

The organizers of Operation Sail also envisaged themselves as making an active intervention into the Cold War. They invited ships from both sides of the Iron Curtain specifically with the intention of demonstrating the event's ability to overcome the divisions between East and West and thus further détente. The ship and the ocean were, in their minds, spaces that transcended politics: "When people are at sea, you don't ask them what their politics are, you ask them how they hoist their sail," declared Frank Braynard, co-founder of Operation Sail, maritime historian and property developer (Lindgren 2014, 114). The philosophy of Operation Sail, according to Braynard, was that "just as seamen are international citizens, we are all seamen on this spaceship earth and must learn to live together" (New York Times 1976).

The claim to being "apolitical" was a key feature of the U.S.' cultural Cold War. The notion of "apolitical culture" was promoted by the U.S. as representative of freedom and free society, in contrast to the propagandistic, heavily political cultural forms produced by the unfree societies in the Soviet sphere (Scott-Smith, 2002). Global sports events during the Cold War also presented themselves as spaces of peace, freedom and fraternity, and beyond politics (Keys 2019). This broader emergence of a notion of being apolitical, and Operation Sail's positioning of itself within that realm, allowed the Pinochet regime to circumvent the counternarratives that were being levelled at it by protestors.

The Chile solidarity movement challenged the inclusion of the *Esmeralda* in the event by pointing out the politics behind the ship. On June 20, 1976, the *New York Times* ran the headline "Four Master from Chile Is Called 'Torture Ship,'" a reference to the accusation that it had been used as a torture center during the first weeks following the 1973 coup. The article quoted solidarity activists who said that the *Esmeralda's* presence, along with any other possible Chilean participation, "would make a mockery of the very principles of democracy and human decency our nation is celebrating this bicentennial year." Solidarity activists also drew attention to the fact that South Africa representatives were present on the ship during the event, highlighting Chile's position within a network of authoritarian states (American

Committee on Africa 1976). For them, the ship's contravention of emerging human rights norms made it incompatible with the broader narrative that the U.S. was constructing about itself.

Conspicuously absent during these debates was any Chilean voice of self-defense. While Operation Sail gave Chile access to U.S. audiences, it also transferred the ability to speak away from Chile itself. By intersecting with the bicentennial, itself a Cold War spectacle, Chile's message became subsumed under the narrative of apolitical culture. While the *Esmeralda's* international voyages were intended to convey the Chilean reality since the coup and to demonstrate the country's future as part of the capitalist world, this discourse of apolitical culture divorced the ship from these explicitly political claims. As the organizers of Operation Sail claimed in their attempts to deflect criticism, those trying to ban the *Esmeralda* were the ones who were "bringing politics into the picture" (New York Times 1976). Chile was caught between multiple competing spectacles, increasingly unable to advance its own agenda on the international stage.

Cutting Out the Dictator: The Pinochet Regime as an "Ugly Detail"

The increasing erasure of the Pinochet regime and the story it wanted to convey to the world with the ship demonstrated the particular way that commemorative diplomacy operated as a public spectacle. Rather than fighting the Cold War through culture and spectacle, commemorative diplomacy elided it by stripping spectacles of their context. The *Esmeralda* became viewed through the same "heritage syndrome" that shaped the way the U.S. itself was viewed during the celebrations, with "an impulse to remember what is attractive or flattering and to ignore all the rest" (Kammen 1991, 220). In the case of the *Esmeralda*, "the rest" was the particular claims made by Chile to fighting the Cold War on behalf of Western Christian civilization.

As a result, a line was increasingly drawn between the ship and the regime. As a Time magazine cover story put it,

Also among the ships will be the graceful four-masted Chilean barkentine *Esmeralda*, a naval trainer once known, among other things, as "the National Pride." It is an ugly detail of the event that, according to a 1974 report ... the *Esmeralda* was used as a prison and torture chamber for political prisoners held by the new military rulers. The Chilean embassy in Washington denies the charge.

(Time 1976a, 8)

The claims made about the *Esmeralda* as a torture ship was an "ugly detail" that stood side by side with, rather than displacing, the

characterization of it as a “graceful” figure. This detail was, furthermore, from the past, while the ship and the event it participated in looked to the future. As Braynard said, “we’re trying to do something positive, not dwell on past horrors” (Lindgren 2014, 114). While the ship itself was celebrated as a symbol of seamanship, the regime that currently sponsored it was disowned.

In claiming the ship but denouncing its past uses, the *Esmeralda*’s champions effectively cut the Pinochet regime off from one of the key vehicles for communicating the vision behind the regime’s Cold War and the commonalities between it and that of the west more broadly. Meanwhile Chile’s ability to defend itself in other forums was becoming even more limited. After rising pressure within the U.S. Congress resulted in the unprecedented move of cutting off military assistance due to human rights concerns, relations with the U.S. plummeted even further in late 1976 following the assassination of a former Chilean diplomat under Allende, Orlando Letelier, and his American colleague Ronni Moffitt on the streets of Washington D.C. by Chilean secret police (McPherson 2019). Soon after, in an attempt to remedy these relations, a new Chilean ambassador, Jorge Cauas, was sent to D.C. with the aim of, in his own words, “reconstituting the image of Chile and avoiding the hyper-visibility that the country has had over the past few years.” This strategy involved abstaining from making political proclamations and instead focusing on promoting the country’s economic achievements (Muñoz 1986, 44).

Focusing on economic achievements, however, left the regime’s political project undefended. This was compounded by the increasing tendency of the *Esmeralda*’s Western mediators to implicitly accept the human rights-related charges being levelled at the regime. In 1982 the *Esmeralda* returned to the U.S. to participate in a regatta to celebrate the 300-year anniversary of the founding of the city of Philadelphia. The city council had passed a motion declaring that the ship was unwelcome, but the event organizers insisted that the current crew should not be held responsible for the ship’s past (New York Times 1982). Years later, defending the ship’s invitation to participate in another Operation Sail event on Liberty Weekend, commemorating the 100-year anniversary of the Statue of Liberty in 1986, the same sentiment was repeated when a supporter claimed that “Assuming that Amnesty [International]’s information is correct, the incidents took place 13 years ago. Every member of the crew at that time has long since gone. We are blaming wood and canvas for something people did” (Christian Science Monitor 1986). The *Esmeralda* no longer operated as a site where Chile contested the Cold War.

While the connection between the Pinochet regime and the ship was being erased, the very presence of the ship was used to reassert the values of Operation Sail and of the U.S.’ own reformulated identity. For some, the intersection between the event and the ship only served to reaffirm

the values of freedom and liberty conveyed by the former. As the president of the National Maritime Society argued in a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, while all could agree on the fact that the ship had been used as a torture site, “to jump from lamenting that to barring the ship from Operation Sail is to misunderstand the nature and purposes of the celebration ... to start shutting out ships at our own initiative ... would be to betray the principle of openness that gives hope to the cause of liberty” (*New York Times* 1986b). Echoing the broader claims made around the superiority of apolitical culture, Operation Sail’s claims to represent certain values was asserted at the expense of Chile’s claims to the same.

The sentiment was also used in parts of the world to support the *Esmeralda*’s visits. In 1983, when challenged in parliament over the ship’s impending visit to New Zealand, Minister of Foreign Affairs W. E. Cooper indicated that he was aware of reports that the *Esmeralda* had been used for torture, but that his government’s concern was “less with a tragic episode in the history of the *Esmeralda* than it is with the restoration of democratic institutions and fundamental freedoms for the people of Chile as soon as possible” (*New Zealand Parliament, House of Representatives*, 1983, 4592). The inclusion of the *Esmeralda* became a performance itself that affirmed the claims to the values of freedom and liberty on the part of those doing the including.

While commemorative events, then, operated as relatively open spaces for the pursuit of both complementary and competing interests (Bennett 2016, 697), the balance of these interests was dependent on the delicate political dynamics governing these interactions. The voyages of the *Esmeralda*, and the way that it was spoken about and represented by its interlocutors, demonstrated the difficult task that the Pinochet regime faced in its endeavor to claim and communicate its membership in an international imagined community centered around the West generally and the U.S. in particular. Caught between the increasing political power of human rights, mobilized by the solidarity movement to contest the *Esmeralda*’s participation on the world stage, and the agenda of those who welcomed the *Esmeralda*’s participation insofar as it enhanced their own performance, Chile found its own message crowded out.

Conclusion

A *New York Times* op-ed criticizing the *Esmeralda*’s participating in the 1986 celebrations had carried the headline, “It’s Like Inviting Pinochet to July 4” (1986a). Indeed, this was exactly what the Pinochet regime had hoped for: the *Esmeralda*’s participation in U.S. national commemorations represented an unexpected success for Chilean cultural diplomacy in a time when regular diplomatic channels were all but closed. But while this may have held true during the 1976 bicentennial, by the time of the Liberty

Weekend celebrations a decade later, things had changed significantly. Pinochet's initial success had been made possible by the international nature of the U.S.' own cultural Cold War, which made participation by Chileans and others in the Bicentennial and other celebrations not only possible but also necessary. As such, the *Esmeralda's* participation was enthusiastically encouraged and strongly defended since it served the needs and interests of the hosts. But within a decade, the breakthrough of human rights concerns into the political mainstream meant that Chilean participation no longer enhanced the message that the U.S. was trying to spread about itself. While the *Esmeralda* was still warmly welcomed and defended, Pinochet himself was actively uninvited, cast out of the imagined international political community.

This shift tells a story about the dynamics of intersecting spectacles and about the dynamics of the global Cold War in both its cultural and conventional aspects. As Taylor points out, "spectacles cannot be understood as separate entities; they can be understood only as they interfaced with spectators and with other national and international spectacles" (1997, xi). While at home Pinochet's authoritarian regime controlled the viewing public's access to alternative, competing narratives, on the global stage it was forced to both compete and cooperate with others in order to tell its story. On the one hand, the Chile solidarity movement contested this story using the concept of human rights, blocking the regime's access to audiences and reshaping the narrative conveyed by the ship. On the other, a range of private actors facilitated its telling, motivated by the desire to tell their own story about their country's identity and its place in the world. For Pinochet, this latter group offered the opportunity to circumvent the challenges presented by the former, but it came at a price. His particular reading of the global Cold War over the fate of western civilization and Chile's place in it became subordinated to that of the U.S. Although the two were broadly aligned, the latter had begun a process of rearticulation in an effort to protect and further its own geopolitical goals. Pinochet's efforts to convey his equal standing within an imagined international community alongside the U.S. clashed with the U.S.' efforts to reassert its hegemony.

The U.S. was not the only focus of Chilean Cold War cultural diplomacy. Another example of intersecting spectacles, the *Esmeralda's* warm welcome in numerous ports across Latin America, Asia, and Africa was part of those government's own performance of their membership in an international community engaged in the same broader political struggle. But over time the Pinochet regime realized that its own interests were better served by playing down its friendly relations with these regimes, which were generally right-wing and authoritarian and subject to the same sorts of international condemnations as Chile increasingly was. Pinochet's imagined international community was based around western, Christian civilization, and the future he imagined for

Chile was one of full membership in the modern capitalist world. Performing membership in this community with the *Esmeralda's* visits was crucial. Whereas doors were shut across Europe, a particular opportunity arose in the U.S. due to that country's own desire to demonstrate its international standing. At the same time, the U.S. was subject to the same pressures that saw Pinochet distance himself from countries like South Africa. The U.S. government's gradual political abandonment of Pinochet during the 1970s and 80s (McPherson 2019) was reflected in the actions of private actors and other governments across the world, who increasingly sacrificed the regime in favor of using Operation Sail and other Tall Ship spectacles to convey a story about their own national identity, traditions and goals.

Note

- 1 Although they continued to deal clandestinely with South Africa, particular in the areas of military and technical cooperation (see NACLA).

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18 Reenacting Bodily Archives of the Cold War in Lola Arias's *Minefield*

Brenda Werth

Researching aspects currently of scholarly interest to the Cold War—such as everyday lived experience, the formation of social networks, grassroots organizations, and the cultural and artistic work that was produced during the period—requires a return to the archive. International relations historians have tended to approach the Cold War “in terms of national interest, state policy, and the broad imperatives of the international economy,” traditionally focusing less attention on the human dimension of the Cold War, particularly the cultural and social histories belonging to marginalized human subjects (Joseph and Spenser 2008, 17). A reassessment of what constitutes the archive of the Cold War is instrumental to exploring this human dimension. In *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida traces the meaning of “archive” to the Greek *arkheion*, “initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, those who commanded” (1996, 2). In the hands of these “guardians of documents,” the archive concentrates and sustains power (Taylor 2003, 19). Taking into account links between archive, power, nation, and memory, in this chapter I turn to performance studies for alternative ways of envisioning the archive that consider embodiment as an archival practice. Drawing on perspectives from performance scholars Diana Taylor, Rebecca Schneider, Joseph Roach, and Susan Bennett, I consider what this expansion of the archive and the focus on embodiment might mean for Cold War historiography.

The importance of the archive to Cold War studies is perhaps nowhere more central than in Latin America, a region where archives have proliferated over the last 30 years in the form of truth-telling commission reports, declassified U.S. documents, and newly discovered police archives. In his work on the missing Latin American narratives in Cold War discourse, Thomas Blanton describes “the gradual recovery of the archival reality in Latin America as the result of various historical justice efforts, showing that despite destruction and coverup, evidence and files have survived from a wide range of repressive regimes” (Blanton 2008, 47). For Blanton, it was the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in Latin America that established “a baseline for the new international

history of Latin America in the Cold War,” at the same time creating “new archives of documentation and testimonies about recent history, both in Latin America and the United States” (Blanton 2008, 51). As scholars frequently note, Latin America is a region that was decidedly hot during the Cold War. Referring to the hot wars that took place in the global south, Andrew Hammond writes, “The scale of carnage makes a mockery of the notion of the Cold War as a ‘long peace,’ a common designation in US historiography ...” (2012, 7). The archive, in the aftermath of Latin America’s hot wars, consists of mass graves and skeletal remains, national genetic banks, and the blood samples of relatives seeking their disappeared loved ones (Franco 2009, 19). The individuals best suited to examine and interpret these archives are often not historians but forensic anthropologists. An important part of the Cold War legacy in Latin America is recounted by its bodies and the stories they tell, the traces of violence they embody and the testimony and evidence they provide. The archive of the Cold War in Latin America consists of these bodies, rendered lifeless by the hot and “dirty” wars that ravaged the region during the 70s and 80s, but there is another archive of bodies as well, belonging to living individuals whose engagement with the Cold War was visceral, and who continue to embody the memories and physical traces of the Cold War in their everyday lives.

In this chapter I attend to this live, bodily archive of the Cold War in the context of theater, focusing on Argentine artist Lola Arias’s *Minefield* (Campo minado).¹ The play brings together onstage three Argentine veterans, three British veterans, and one Gurkha soldier and veteran of the most extensive naval action of the Cold War, otherwise known as the Guerra de Malvinas (to Argentines) or the Falklands War (to the British), that broke out on April 2, 1982, when Argentina invaded the British held Islands, and lasted until June 14, 1982, when Argentina surrendered. The conflict swiftly revealed the Argentine military to be unprepared and greatly outmatched by the Royal Navy, though declassified documents indicate that the U.S. initially feared the possibility of a protracted conflict and the formation of an alliance between the Soviet Union and Argentina (Borger 2012). At the end of the war 649 Argentine and 255 British soldiers were dead. At first glance, the Malvinas/Falklands War does not seem to exemplify the Cold War conflict. During the military dictatorship preceding the war, Argentina had been an ally of the U.S. in combatting the perceived threat of communism. But as I show here, Argentina’s radical shift in alliance after the invasion resituates the conflict in the framework of the Cold War and draws attention to the geopolitical fluidity of the islands in the South Atlantic imaginary.

What is truly extraordinary about *Minefield* is that Arias was able to create a work involving veterans from both sides of the war, former rivals, bringing them together collaboratively onstage in the reenactment of battle scenes they had participated in during the war. In addition to

re-embodiment scenes of battle onstage, they present video footage, photographs, letters, magazines, war memorabilia, toys, and other objects belonging to their personal memory archive of the war. They play music onstage, recite poetry, read letters, and don farcical masks of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Argentine Junta General Leopoldo Galtieri. They role-play therapy sessions and talk shows and reminisce about their lives and the profound impact the war had and continues to have on them. They talk about who they were before the war and who they became after the war, and the alienation they felt upon return. Though Arias has spoken of the healing power of the performance for the veterans, in no way does the play present a reconciliation of points of view or nationalistic claims regarding the Islands. While audiences witness the affective bond the veterans form over the course of the performance, at the end of the day, the performers agree to disagree.

Commissioned by the LIFT Festival and premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in London in 2016, and subsequently staged in Buenos Aires at the Center of Experimental Arts at the San Martín National University, *Minefield* has received international praise and at the time of writing this chapter is in its fourth year of a worldwide tour. In the four years since the premiere, theater and performance scholars have offered critical insights on the play. For example, Jordana Blejmar focuses on the ethical limits of performing traumatic memory and the cultivation of empathy between performers; Cecilia Sosa compares audience reception in Buenos Aires and London and proposing the possibility of “naked transnational citizenship”; Geoffrey Maguire considers the autobiographical body juxtaposed to multimedia onstage to question dominant narratives of Malvinas/Falklands War; Paola Hernández elaborates on the aspects of testimony, reenactment, and language in the context of theater of the real, and Verónica Perera juxtaposes the destabilization of national sovereignty to bodies of war.² This valuable work informs my own analysis here, though what I am most deeply drawn to explore in this chapter is the live body as archive of the past, and specifically as an archive of the Cold War.

While much of the current research on the Cold War is concerned with artistic practices that took place during the Cold War period, in this chapter I am more interested in how artists and performers create work in the present that engages in remembering the Cold War. I should note here that I am not focusing on historical drama or works that offer fictionalized accounts of the Cold War, though these works offer compelling interpretations of the past. I am primarily concerned with drawing attention to the hot wars of the Cold War and the concrete traces of violence and suffering these hot wars produced on real live bodies. Arias’s *Minefield* provides an ideal case study for this analysis because the performers of the play actually fought in the

Malvinas/Falklands War. Their bodies constitute an archive of the war and, by extension, the meta-framework of the Cold War. My first argument, then, is that Arias's *Minefield* serves an evidentiary function through presenting the actual bodies that suffered during the hot Cold War that can be understood in tandem with the evidentiary function of forensic archives that have documented the mass violence and human rights violations that are a part of the legacy of the Cold War in Latin America. In my analysis I draw attention to the specific embodiments of pain and suffering onstage performed by the veterans to show not only the effects of war in a universal sense but also specifically to revise the myth of the long peace and to correct the illusion of the Cold War as primarily a rhetorical one, particularly with regard to the Global South. My second argument derives from my fascination with the unprecedented and successful collaboration between veterans on opposing sides of the Malvinas/Falklands conflict onstage. What I propose here is that the dynamic and changing spatial deployment of performers onstage, their creative roleplaying, and their travel and performance across geographical contexts to stage their play, all contribute to a reimagining of geopolitical affects that disrupts the North-South and East-West binaries of the Cold War. Here I take into account the messiness of Cold War alliances that the Malvinas/Falklands War generated for Argentina, in particular, and how the play, in turn, reflects this messiness and destabilizes the "dichotomizing paradigms of interpretation" often summoned in characterizations of the Cold War (Joseph and Spenser 2008, 17). Third, I address Arias's explicit comment that she was uninterested in putting forth portrayals of heroism and the epic narratives that frequently characterize cultural representations of war. While this decision had the effect of accentuating the perceived vulnerability of the veterans onstage, it also, I argue, introduces an account of the Cold War that does not reinforce its grand narratives of masculinity and militarism but instead focuses our attention on the human dimension of the war, and perhaps even the curatorial role of Arias herself, as a woman in charge of rewriting and editing the individual accounts of war into a cohesive whole.³

Embodying the Archive of the Cold War

Throughout the play, veterans narrate their experiences before, during, and after the war, drawing on a personal archive of letters, photographs, clothing, video footage, newspaper excerpts, and other objects, to tell their stories. These props, as they are manipulated by the performers onstage, become an extension of their own bodily archive. As Arias herself affirms, "This idea of creating a live archive—through the stories but also through the documents, through the objects, and the unique poems—is very important in this piece" (Arias 2019a). In this way, the veterans'

performances serve as a form of embodied testimony to the physical and psychological suffering caused by the Malvinas/Falklands War.

Characteristic of Arias's documentary work is the use of clothing onstage, demonstrated powerfully in her 2009 play *My Life After*, in which performers put on their parents' clothes to travel back in time to the 70s and the violent context of the Argentine dictatorship. In her discussion of *My Life After*, Cecilia Sosa writes, "Clothes can be productive surfaces for the circulation of affects. They are ubiquitous objects, emotionally charged, inhabited by contested emotions. Clothes travel through time. They can become mediums with which to touch the past and glimpse the future" (2014, 364). In *Minefield*, for the Argentine veterans, clothing has the additional connotation of providing minimal warmth and protection against the harsh elements of the climate of the Islands and also belongs to the inventory of military accoutrements that soldiers received. Clothing in the context of the war was necessary for survival. Former Argentine soldier, Marcelo, talks about a trip he took to Malvinas in 2009 when he returned to where he was stationed during the war and found the remains of the clothing he had worn. Onstage, as he describes what he found, he hands the objects over to Gabriel, another Argentine veteran, who then zooms in on them with his camera to project a magnified image on the back screen: "The remains of a blanket ... A pullover ... And the remains of my tent ... I slept here for over sixty days, clinging on to it so it wouldn't blow away. This is the poncho we wore on guard duty. It was very important to me. During the war, it rained for twenty-seven days straight" (Arias 2017, 23). At the end of the scene he puts on the poncho. Clothing here triggers the memory of the past and momentarily eclipses the distance between past and present. The clothing items Marcelo recovered from Malvinas/Falklands and presents onstage are, as he says, remains, almost in a forensic sense, that belong to the archive of war. In retrieving his clothing from the islands and putting them on again in the theater, Marcelo highlights, on the one hand, continuity between the war and his present and, on the other, shows his own agency in extracting the remains from the museum-like islands and re-signifying them in a different context. This scene also emphasizes the symbiotic relationship between the bodies of the veterans and the objects onstage and how clothing can extend the bodily archive.

Over the course of the performance as the veterans progressively narrate their experiences during and after the war, they begin to reference their bodies more frequently, recalling and reenacting memories not only related to pain or injury but to their everyday lives as well. Rubén, who was on the Argentine cruiser *General Belgrano* when it was torpedoed and sunk by the British, describes the moment before impact, "At 3:50 pm I leave the mess to start my shift. I touch my face, notice I have some stubble, and decide to shave. So I change direction and go to

my bunk to fetch my razor. 4:01 pm. I hear a crash like the cruiser has hit a mountain. The power goes off” (Arias 2017, 23). At other times the veterans reference their bodies in such a way as to draw attention to the time that has elapsed between the war and the present. In one scene David is reenacting physical training exercises and responds to Lou, “Stop, stop. Lou, I’m fifty-eight, for crying out loud!” (Arias 2017, 7). And in another moment, David announces, “And still today, I can shit, shave, shower and shampoo in under three minutes” showing audiences how the habits acquired during the war have endured and continue to be embodied in the present (Arias 2017, 12). These accounts are of course not as harrowing as those relaying memories of battle and injury, but they nonetheless call attention to the embodied nature of memory, in general, and they remind spectators that they are witnessing the actual bodies the performers reference in their recollections. It is, according to Geoffrey Maguire, “this overlap between the body and the veteran and his story that endows the play with such significant affective potency from the outset” (2019, 4).

A signature technique of Arias’s is reenactment, or a “remake,” in her words, whereby performers reconstruct scenes from the past onstage. In this play, performers reenact numerous battle scenes, employing a variety of techniques; for example, they manipulate toy soldiers to reenact a particularly gruesome scene; they assume different roles to assist their fellow cast members in recreating their memories onstage; they pose against the backdrop of landscape images of the islands projected on a screen behind the performers; and they mimic the sounds of wind and sea that they remember from the islands. In her study on reenactment, Schneider’s interest lies “in the attempt to literally touch time through the residue of the gesture” (2011, 2). She is fascinated by the lure of achieving exactness, the idea that if reenactors “repeat an event just so, getting the details as close as possible to fidelity, they will have touched time and time will have recurred” (Schneider 10). The demands of battle reenactment and the desire to reconstruct the past with exact precision can be great, causing “physical collapse” or “a profound confusion of time” that may, however, lead to what reenactors call a “period rush” or a “wargasm” (Schneider 35). There are rich synergies here between Schneider’s concept of reenactment and Joseph Roach’s definition of performance as “the doomed search for originals by continuously auditioning stand-ins” (Roach 1996, 3). For Roach, who seeks to understand how “culture reproduces and re-creates itself,” through the practice of surrogation, performance “stands in for an elusive entity that it is not but that it must vainly aspire both to embody and replace” (Roach 3). Schneider and Roach’s theories of reenactment and performance are critical for understanding some of the aims and effects of the use of reenactment in Arias’s *Minefield*, and they also allow for an exploration of what makes Arias’s onstage reenactments unique.

Their reenactments, aided through screened images and the manipulation of personal objects, do not seek to achieve literal exactness in the way that battle reenactors frequently do, but in reembodying their own lived experiences, they achieve a realism or authenticity that in some ways surpasses the effect of mimetic precision. This effect, for audiences, is particularly powerful and affectively gripping. For the performers re-embodying the experience of battle onstage, the psychological and emotional demands are significant. Lou talks about how performing in the play affected his physical and psychological well-being, “When I arrived in Buenos Aires, I began to keep a diary. During rehearsals some questions brought back memories of something in my past that I never told anybody about. I began to have sleepless nights, flashbacks. My mind would just go wandering off” (Arias 2017, 53). Arias herself acknowledges that they hired a psychologist to assist the veterans because of the traumatic memories that resurfaced during rehearsals (Arias 2019a). During the play, two of the veterans perform a therapy session. Seated on chairs facing each other onstage, David and Marcelo have a conversation about the continued impact of the war and the serious effects of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Former British soldier David, who trained to be a psychologist after the war, begins by asking former Argentine soldier Marcelo to tell him about his life after the war. Marcelo talks candidly about his drug addiction and suicide attempt after the war. And David, who over the course of the conversation shifts out of the role of therapist and becomes more of a confidant, talks about his PTSD and the anxiety, depression, and social isolation he experienced. The play may trigger traumatic memories for the veterans, but they are eager to continue. As Arias notes, “This is the third year on tour. And for me, well, I think we could wind it up, but they don’t want to. The fact that the piece is still travelling is because of them” (Arias 2019b). Though their reasons for wanting to continue staging the play are no doubt complex and varied, their joint desire to do so suggests that the repeated performance has generated a community of support and collective acknowledgment of individual experiences and memories. In drawing our attention to the individual trauma, both physical and psychological, sustained by the veterans, Arias shows she is less interested in perpetuating grand narratives of the war, choosing instead to highlight the human dimension, irrespective of which side the veterans fought on. Through the technique of reenactment, the veterans’ bodies hold what Schneider suggests is the “evidentiary status of the trace carried forward and backward in the form and force of affective, incorporated ‘live’ actions” (2011, 38). Veterans’ bodies reveal evidentiary traces of the war and serve as live archives of traumatic experience and survival of a hot war that defied the simplistic geopolitical and ideological binaries of the Cold War.

Performing Shifts in Alliance of the Cold War

The Malvinas/Falklands War proves to be a very unusual case because of the significant shifts in alliance Argentina performed in order to rally support for the invasion of the islands. Stella Paresa Krepp's analysis of the Malvinas/Falklands War offers a lucid account of its complicated position vis-à-vis the Cold War. She analyzes how Argentina, after failing to secure backing from the U.S., NATO, and the European Community, sought to "mobilize Third World support by framing the Malvinas as a North-South conflict" (Krepp, 2017, 143). This shift in alliance, however, "was fundamentally at odds with Argentine Cold War imperatives, as it required engagement with Cuba, which was the head of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement" (Krepp 143). Fidel Castro endorsed this alliance and openly urged the heads of state of the Non-Aligned Movement to support Argentina in fighting against the imperial powers in a war he described as "criminal" (Krepp 143). Drawing on the "Global South Atlantic" framework that Kerry Bystrom and Joseph Slaughter propose, Krepp shows how distinct geopolitical spaces and ideological imaginaries overlapped during the Malvinas/Falklands War. As Krepp explains, for Southern Cone countries ideologically aligned with the U.S. and Operation Condor in the fight against so called "subversion," the South Atlantic was considered the last stronghold of the Cold War, but for countries like Cuba or Nicaragua, the Atlantic was a link to Africa and symbolized the promise of the expansion of communism (Krepp 143). Krepp concludes, "During the Falklands/ Malvinas crisis, therefore, distinct geopolitical spaces overlapped, most notably between the North and South Atlantic, but also between the 'Red Atlantic' and a Cold War South Atlantic in a peculiar constellation of national, regional, and international trajectories" (Krepp 143). For Argentina, the ideological shift from identifying as Western ally engaged in the fight against communism, to alliance with a "Third World" Latin American fight against a colonial power, had cultural implications as well. As Krepp points out, "Whereas the perception of Latin America as part of the Third World had been readily accepted in some parts of Latin America, this was not true for Argentina. Argentine national narratives centered on an alleged 'white' Argentina, closely tied to Europe in both culture and descent" (Krepp 148). Argentina's numerous shifts in alliance, both ideological and cultural, brought to the fore discourses of race and empire, and revealed that the country's positionality in a Cold War framework was politically fluid.

One of the most intriguing aspects to consider in analyzing this performance is how it was received in London, where it first premiered, and its subsequent restaging in Buenos Aires six months later. In the context of this chapter, I am interested in thinking too about the fact that the performers traveled between North and South, flying over the islands

where they fought, traversing the contested geopolitical space and imaginary of the Atlantic. As Bystrom and Slaughter discuss in their book *The Global South Atlantic*, the “history of Atlantic studies is itself a story of fluidity and drift,” one that has “tilted the topic to the north for half a century” (2018, 11). Recent work seeks to consider other ways of imagining the Atlantic from the Global South (Bystrom and Slaughter 13). The idea of the South Atlantic, they point out, “has been imagined (and unimagined) from multiple global positions over the course of modern history” (Bystrom and Slaughter 20).

The play, itself constituting a kind of live and changing archive, incorporates the performers’ metacommentary on their experiences on the other side of the Atlantic, giving the play a testimonial function in documenting the effects of trans-Atlantic travel and reorientation of Atlantic perspectives. Toward the beginning of the performance, Marcelo describes the rehearsal process to the audience, “The Malvinas War lasted seventy-four days, from April 2 to June 14, 1982. The rehearsals for this play took a little longer. For several months, three British and three Argentine veterans worked together in Buenos Aires and London. The Brits don’t speak Spanish, we Argentines don’t speak English. But somehow we understood each other” (Arias 2017, 1). What strikes us first is the irony of the fact that rehearsal lasted longer than the war itself; and second, that their understanding, according to Marcelo, is not achieved through spoken language, emphasizing the significance of bodily engagement and collaborative reenactment of the past. The rehearsals and premieres taking place on both sides of the Atlantic create a trans-Atlantic community consisting of bodies and props, that “drifts,” to use Bystrom and Slaughter’s term, across land and water, from South to North and North to South, generating new affective trajectories and contexts of reception (Bystrom and Slaughter, 2018, 1–30).

What Cecilia Sosa and other critics make immediately clear is that the performance resonated very differently in Buenos Aires than it had in London. In an interview, Arias observes that the production in Buenos Aires created a silent tension among audience members, touching a raw nerve (Schejtman, 2016). While the performance received standing ovations in both contexts, Sosa remarks that in London many spectators learned about a war that had been largely neglected, leaving very little impact on their everyday lives, whereas in Argentina the war still provokes a visceral response and is central to the national imaginary (Sosa 2017, 181). During the performance, Lou, one of the former British soldiers, says, “When I arrived in Buenos Aires for the rehearsals, I was shocked. The Malvinas were everywhere: T-shirts, car bumper stickers, wall murals, photographs down the corridor of a children’s hospital” (Arias 2017, 64). I would like to return to Bystrom and Slaughter’s discussion of the global South Atlantic as “an oceanic space that can never be seen in its totality, but

may still be glimpsed from certain vantages (2018, 19). The play, performed in London and Buenos Aires, reveals multiple vantage points of a South Atlantic war. Thus, while the play successfully orchestrates a transnational collaboration among British and Argentine performers, generating, in Sosa's words, "a common ground of fragility and vulnerability," producing the play in both London and Buenos Aires also showcases the radically different perceptions of the Malvinas/Falkland Islands, and by extension the South Atlantic, held by the British and Argentines (2017, 186).

Another area in which Arias innovates in this work is her concerted attempt to curate the kinds of narratives that soldiers share onstage so as not to replicate the classic and well-worn tropes of heroism and masculinity that tend to characterize dominant accounts of war.⁴ In focusing on personal accounts that accentuate the veterans' vulnerability, she creates a space for new perspectives that do not resuscitate the hypermasculine and militaristic discourses of war, prominent in Argentine narratives of the Malvinas war espousing, according to Oscar Blanco, Adriana Imperatore, and Martín Kohan, an official triumphalist discourse that demanded heroes (Blanco, Imperatore and Kohan 1993, 82). Arias states explicitly, "I didn't want to tell an epic story of the war. I wanted to tell the story of a failure, of a disaster that was produced by this war. It was a big struggle because sometimes [the participating men] wanted or needed to be portrayed as heroes, even if they were not so aware of it" (Arias 2019a). Arias prefers portrayals of humanness to heroism, and as such, veterans onstage admit to feeling fear, experiencing anxiety, and remorse. British veteran Lou's account of his surrender after the Argentines attacked Stanley offers one clear example of an alternative war narrative: "What I remember from the firing and the fighting is the noise and the confusion; the worry that one of my lads had been hit, and my own fear of not being brave enough" (Arias 2017, 46). In humanizing the former soldiers and drawing out their psychological and emotional responses to war, Arias defuses the hypermasculinity that was both central to portrayals of the military in Argentina during the dictatorship and Anglo-European depictions of the Cold War. In her discussion of masculinity and the Cold War, Kyle Cuordileone writes that Cold War politics in America "put a new premium on hard masculine toughness and rendered anything less than that soft and feminine and, as such, a real or potential threat to the security of the nation" (2000, 516). In Argentina, similarly, the project of national identity during the dictatorship engaged the military in a struggle to "occupy the 'masculine' position while emasculating, feminizing, and marginalizing the 'other'" (Taylor 1997, 9). Arias also invites us to consider her own role as a woman director and writer, creating war narratives that do not reinforce official heroism, masculinity, and militarism, "I think the fact that I was the one writing it—the fact that I was a woman writing these

stories of men—created another narrative of the whole historical event” (Arias 2019a). A woman writer or director entering the traditional masculine space of the Malvinas/Falklands War constitutes a sort of invasion in its own right and can precipitate the breakdown of official discourse, gendered expectations, and national narratives. As director, Arias’s role is to choreograph performers’ actions; as a writer she gives them new scripts, based on their autobiographical accounts. The effects are significant because they facilitate novel perspectives and frameworks for remembering and reassessing both the Malvinas/Falklands War and provide new insights into Cold War historiography through documentary performance.

In this chapter I have focused on the archives of the Cold War, specifically the live archives embodied by veterans of the Malvinas/Falklands War in the context of Lola Arias’s documentary performance *Minefield*. Through reenacting scenes of battle onstage, veterans in this play reveal the bodily traces of physical and psychological violence of the war. This archival evidence, I argue, should be understood in tandem with the proliferation of archives uncovered and constructed in Latin America over the last several decades, revealing mass graves, skeletal remains, genetic findings, all pertaining to the bodily archive of the Cold War in Latin America. For Arias, reenactment onstage of one’s own lived experience is a way of creating and sustaining an archive, but her reenactments are markedly collaborative, and thus require performers to assume the role of supporting actor in recreating the memories of others. This bold and playful reconfiguration of roles and subject positions disrupts the binaries of war and inserts new perspectives into how we remember war. Premiered first in London, followed by its Buenos Aires premiere six months later, the play engages in a transatlantic performance, having performers fly over the Malvinas/Falklands Islands as they cross the South Atlantic, moving from South to North and North to South. Reception of the play in both contexts reveals divergent perceptions of the war corresponding to radically different conceptions of the South Atlantic, a key geopolitical space that is central to competing Cold War imaginaries. Last, Arias resists reproducing tropes of heroism and masculinity in her work, instead focusing on narratives that highlight the veterans’ humanness, their psychological responses to war, their feelings of fear, anxiety, and isolation. *Minefield* makes a fascinating contribution to Cold War historiography: it urges us to reassess the role and form of the Cold War archive through performance, provides us with new vantage points from which to remember and reflect on the hottest naval battle of the Cold War, and uncovers war narratives that counter the masculine and heroic portrayals of war that have traditionally characterized discourses on Malvinas/Falklands and the Cold War.

Notes

- 1 *Minefield* is the second work in a cycle of war, consisting of three works developed by Arias around the Malvinas/Falklands War. The first work, *Veterans*, is a video installation in which Argentine veterans of the Malvinas/Falklands War reflect on and reenact their experiences of war. *Veterans* premiered in 2014 in London at the Royal Court Theatre and later premiered as part of the multimedia exhibition, *Stunt Double* (Doble de riesgo) at the Memory Park (Parque de la Memoria) in Buenos Aires. The third work is a documentary film based on the play *Minefield*, premiered in 2018.
- 2 Blejmar 2017; Sosa, 2017; Maguire, 2019; Hernández (2020); Perera (2018).
- 3 Lola Arias's *Minefield* establishes direct continuity with Federico León's play, *Museo Miguel Ángel Boezzio*, premiered in Buenos Aires in 1998 as part of Vivi Tellas's theatre experiment *Proyecto Museos*. In this semi-autobiographical one-person play, a Malvinas veteran narrates accounts from his life onstage and testifies to the personal trauma and social isolation he experienced as a result of the war. *Minefield* also resonates powerfully with Argentine cultural production on the Malvinas War from the eighties and nineties, including Rodolfo Fogwill's foundational *Los pichiciegos*, which, according to Julieta Vitullo, demonstrate the impossibility of creating epic narratives of heroism of the war (2012, 19). See also Noe Montez's excellent account of proliferation of plays about the Malvinas War created in Argentina during the Fernández de Kirchner presidency (2007–2015), a period in which national claims of sovereignty once again gained visibility and became a centerpiece of Cristina Kirchner's presidential agenda (Montez, 2018). For a historical overview of theater produced in Great Britain in the decade after the war, see Paget, 1992.
- 4 See Julieta Vitullo's eloquent discussion of Argentine literature and film on the Malvinas War (2012,19). According to Vitullo, the official narratives of heroism perpetuated by the government and the media contradicted national reality and facilitated the creation of farcical rather than epic narratives of the war in cultural production.

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Afterword

Juan Orrantia

Sourced around experiences involving former Portuguese colonies in Africa these photographs move back and forth, across and beyond their own moments. African independence is at times considered a rupture, a breaking point that forced or allowed the possibility of creating something new. Through these images I think of the moment of liberation as a prism that refracts ideas of liberation across time, people, and place. I thus combine, intervene, and digitally alter images in order to imagine trajectories, encounters, overlaps, and reappearances across time and space. The presence of colonial gazes, legacies, and imaginaries of Cold War solidarities, whiteness, the representational function of photography, and archival logics and structures are strands that inhabit these images and their afterlives. The following textual fragments act as a roadmap that describe moments related to the material, conceptual, formal, and historical origins and sources of the images.

1

A few years ago, digging through archival material at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington D.C., I came across a postcard from Mozambican Airways, dated 1951 (when Mozambique was still a Portuguese colony). The image portrays an airplane flying, guarded by a large angel wrapped in the Portuguese flag hovering above it.

The blonde angel wrapped in the flag is a colorful legitimization of colonialism and white divinity as a driving force of progress. Yet, much like Benjamin's Angel of history, he too whirls the debris of the stormy future into the present past. From the vantage point of the now we know the Portuguese flag would soon be lowered in Mozambique, marking the beginning of years of joy but also struggle and death. The now is an image at a standstill containing both future and past. What we see is an ongoing tension between known pasts, imagined futures, and their outcomes. The divine figure of progress in a frozen image congeals times, much like stones congeal what once were separate things like mud, dirt, cosmic dust, fire, and water. Or as is more usual in human history, blood, dirt, and the claim to divine greed.



Figure 19.1 “Liberation” (2019). Digital collage by Juan Orrantia.

2

I was walking down the jetty in the city of Bissau where Chris Marker had filmed parts of his masterpiece *Sans Soleil*. Standing in one of the two which he called *poles of survival* was nothing more than to experience the unravelling tensions of time. In the passages on Guinea-Bissau Marker relies on montage in order to leap from the excitement of the moment of the dream of liberation become true, to its sometimes violent and disappointing outcomes in the future. In frames that collapse time, hope and celebration merge with betrayal and in so doing bring out the presence of these future pasts. The now we see is nothing but the debris of the future of what it was supposed to be.

Photographing in the same places where he had first visualized these outcomes was for me a similar moment of nonlinear transition between the past and present. Making photographs here under the gaze of the military regime seemed to add an echo to Marker’s images some 30 odd years later. And as I reimagine these photographs now, another 7 years ahead in time, they feel more like a fleeting moment of timeless convergence, where what images apparently show on their surface is opened up to their layered, partially concealed, transformed, erased, or even negated inscriptions of time.



Figure 19.2 Untitled (Archival stratigraphy).

3

Specters of moments of liberation, but also its anxieties, utopias, and (im)possibilities live on through screens, amidst sound installations, performances, and photographs. There is now a growing body of works from contemporary artists from Portugal, Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and South Africa who in direct or indirect ways have revisited the role of visual culture and its relation with anticolonial ideas set forth in the 1960s and 1970s. In Mozambique, Samora Machel's establishment of the National Institute of Cinema (INC) was part of the revolutionary understanding of visual culture as part of nation building and social change. This idea echoed in avant-garde filmmakers like Jean Luc Godard and Jean Rouch who participated in film training processes in the newly independent country. Similarly, Amilcar Cabral's understanding of culture as an integral part of the revolution led him to support a generation of filmmakers like Flora Gomes who trained in Cuba. As much as photography and film were a conduit and structural element of colonialism, their use by anticolonial leaders is a historical testament to the screen and image as sites of contestation of colonialism as much as a source of dreams of liberation and Cold War solidarities.

But many such images and reels have been forgotten, damaged, or simply never completed. If anything, this struggle between visibility and invisibility of and in images connects them to anticolonial thought and by extension to its afterlives. Whether in art contexts or flowing through the internet in



Figure 19.3 It's a rush (Digital collage).

degraded and pixelated sequences or jpgs these images and their histories continue to harbor the potential to unsettle the images themselves as much as what they contain (Balona de Oliveira 2016; see also Steyerl 2009).

4

Ambivalence produces frictions. And somehow these frictions carry with them a possibility to seep into imagination. The possibility of imaging something new. Or better yet, like musician Ze Manel told my friend and

me in his recording studio in Bissau back then, that after 40 years of independence and shit having gone so wrong, it was, like years before, time for a new something.

The arrogance of images as vectors of truth offers such a possibility. Initial representations can get questioned through varying degrees of subjectivity but also unanticipated reactions. Despite being imagined and glorified as the carriers of “unquestionable” meaning, photographs can allow us to imagine alternatives beyond prescribed views of the world. It means going back to rethink the original representational function of the image as a record of something, and altering it through addition or subtraction of elements that conceptually and formally affect it and its reading into something new.¹

Photographs and reels are forms of materializing, congealing, and imaging time. That is why their own processes of degradation, loss, absence, or resurfacing create new forms of relationships with time, memory, and imagination. To think these transformations of meaning and contestation is to think through processes that involve archives and their institutions, chemical and organic forms of deterioration, their morphing into either art, ethnography, or heritage, as much as their own lives and forms as digital files with presence and circulation in screens. That is to say they have the potential to release.

5

Unexpected paths of multiple encounters #1.

Database search, Smithsonian Archives:

Key words: Lusophone, colonies, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Angola.

Result: [musket ball, Angola card].

Searching the database the results sent me to a musket ball, classified and labeled “Angola” (Louisiana). It took me a while to understand that the origin of this artifact was the Louisiana State Penitentiary in the U.S., known simply as Angola. And even more to learn that this place is a nodal point of Black lives and crossings. Built on the grounds of a former plantation where most of the slaves had been apparently brought from Angola, it was later converted into a maximum security prison. Initially the plantation was run by prisoners housed in the slave barracks. With time the prison became known for its violence, chain gangs, and extremely brutal practices of control. And although chain gangs as such have been replaced by self-sustainable agricultural work by the inmates it is difficult not to see the image of a plantation embedded in the structure and history of racism that this place carries. So bear with me if I am talking about racism in the U.S. while thinking from Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. That is the point. From the direct ties to Angola as well as the possibility that some of the slaves would have also come from Mozambique or Guinea-Bissau, to the history of Black power and consciousness in prisons



Figure 19.4 (Vorster).

and the solidarities set forth between African American and African independence movements, the encounter with this place echoes the trajectories and reverberations of ideas and dreams of liberation connected to structures and institutions of control. The card, the name, the database sparked the presence of such silences and traces in the archive (Enwezor 2008). And so did the musket ball itself, a small metal object that once removed from its own process of geological time might have sparked these (not so) random connections of which it is part.

6

I remember the smell of blood in the air. The mist rose from the river. I walked in as blood trickled down the floor and dogs licked what they could from its puddles. In the middle of this early morning scene a woman walked over to me when she heard I was from Colombia. Amidst the butchered cows we chatted along in Spanish. I heard about her veterinary studies in Cuba, she told me not to miss the house where Cabral had been born, and we laughed at the irony of two Colombians walking the streets of Bissau in this age of cocaine and military coups. Outside the sun warmed the waters of the river that once saw Amilcar play as a little child. I suppose.



Figure 19.5 Museum visits (Intervention, digital collage).

The history of connections that “brought us” together, this woman from Bissau and me, a somewhat lost Colombian making photographs in the town of Bafatá, continues to follow paths traced through the Cold War, anticolonial solidarities, and recent cocaine histories that managed to put our two countries on the map. This history reverberates and echoes into unexpected crossings through time and geography. The Cold War created a relationship between Africa and Latin America that, in a way, I inherited even if not entirely knowingly but most clearly full of naiveté.

Archeology	No. Spec: 1
Cat. No. Name: GUN MUSKET BALL	
515983**	
----- Culture: NOT GIVEN	
Acc. No.	
350434 Locale: ANGOLA B4 ANGOLA PRISON FARM SITE ,	
----- WEST FELICIANA PARISH,	
Acc. Date LOUISIANA, U.S.A.	
19MAR1986 Donor: HARRIS, R.K.	
----- Collector: HARRIS, R.K.	
Field No. Date Coll.: 1924 TO 1980	
ANGOLA B4 Size: DIAM 1.2CM	
----- Material: METAL LEAD	
Acquired	
PURCHASE Technique:	

Remarks: SURFACE 256.7 GR. 18/32" .5625	

Figure 19.6 Museum Archive search card.

This history of solidarity feeds on past victories and emancipations, materialized amongst others in military and political support, intellectual collaborations, and cinema. It also produced a genealogical relationship between montage, the essayistic logic, and African anticolonialism (Eshun and Gray 2011). These days I continue to go back to the images of dance, speeches, and feelings of euphoria in the film *The First Pan African Festival in Algiers*.² William Klein filmed and edited so many materials and things that took place that 21st of July, 1969 in Algeria: Cabral speaking about culture and revolution, Miriam Makeba almost in trance, a delegation of Frelimo marching down the streets, Berber musicians jamming alongside Archie Shepp, Black Panther leaders exiled in Algiers, as well as posters and other films. The film embodies the triad of montage, anticolonial solidarity, and the essay as a testament to itself as both reality and illusion. It is an affective register that feels like a tangled yarn of threads of people and places that I have encountered down the line. It creates a connection with a long lost time that I never knew but still echoes in one way or another. But maybe that's simply part of the illusion.

So, to think of why convergences like the one in Bafatá felt so true is also to set forth a process of unveiling, of uncovering a series of unfinished projects that most probably are simply absent from the surface of our everyday awareness.

The scene of blood congealing on the ground being washed away that morning is a simple act of everydayness. It is also an act of montage as a

dialectic with a relatively unknown outcome. It involves an expansion of reality and illusion that in this case remembers the myopic understanding of self, of masculinity, race, and inherited privilege in postcolonial memories in the making that I too bring to the table. These moments are the embodiment of solidarities as an affective expression of its genealogies while also enacting a script of partial disillusionment.

7

They seem like different moments. But I prefer to call them paths into different forms of everyday forms of living amidst debris, specters, and undercurrents. The question of liberation in relation to its multiple temporalities runs across all these moments. Sometimes it might just be there as the trace of a utopian memory. But it is also present as an ongoing process of unveiling, or removal of layers, of peeling away the accumulation of history. Liberation can be like digging through rubble

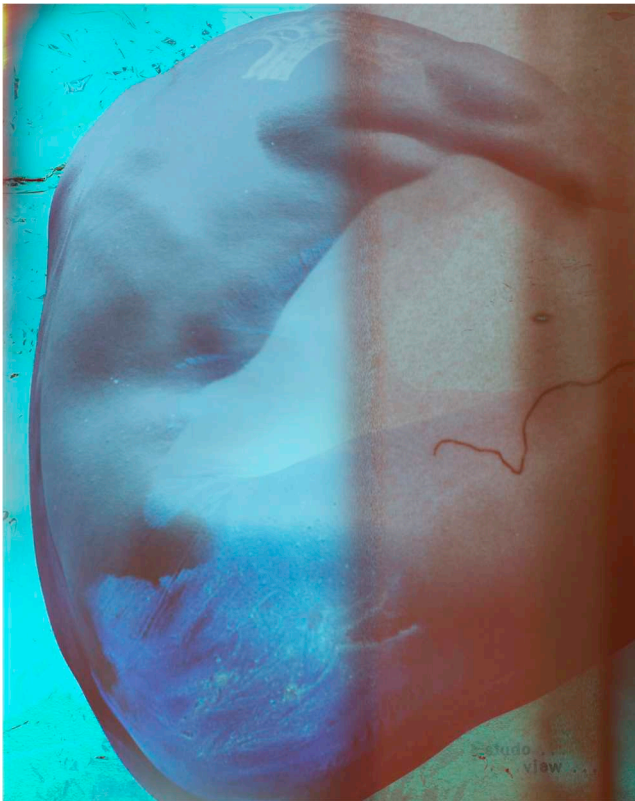


Figure 19.7 Self portrait (Digital collage).

only to find more rubble. Yet, the process will not stop as one is guided by the impulse of an image. Even if that image morphs, is blurred, or pixelated. It serves as an imaginary guide and reminder that things will not be the same.

Liberation reverberates across time and space.

Speaking of the old building of the Instituto Nacional de Cinema in Maputo, of its demise and abandonment, but one can also say of its solidification across time and rubble, filmmaker and former member of the cinema project led by Samora Machel and Frelimo, Isabel Norohna says:

Everything that was made was not destroyed, but also does not exist (cited in *Kuxa Kanema* 2003).

Liberation becomes a word of multiple meanings and trajectories. The intricacies of these crossings, but more so the way they are acted out, is a tangled web of imaginations and realities.

Notes

- 1 Here I am taking a cue from recent work like Mikhael Subotzky's *Massive Nerve Corpus* as well as Joan Fontcuberta's ideas of post-photography.
- 2 The Pan-African Festival of Algiers (1969); see also Hadouchi (2011).

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