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Stecopoulos, Harilaos

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**HARILAOS STECOPULOS** is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Iowa. His books include *A History of the Literature of the World: Southern Fictions and US Imperialisms* (2008) and *Race and the Subject of Masculinities* (1997).

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Cover image: Ralph Ellison taking a walk with a student at the Institute for American Studies at the University of Chicago, 1955. American National Library (S-15-1497-2).

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**STECOPULOS** ■ **Telling America's Story to the World**

**Telling America's Story to the World**

**Literature, Internationalism, Cultural Diplomacy**

**HARILAOS STECOPULOS**

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**T***elling America's Story to the World* argues that state and state-affiliated cultural diplomacy contributed to the making of postwar US literature. Highlighting the role of liberal internationalism in US cultural outreach, Harilaos Stecopoulos contends that the state mainly sent authors like Ralph Ellison, Robert Lowell, William Faulkner, Langston Hughes, and Maxine Hong Kingston overseas not just to demonstrate the achievements of US civilization but also to broadcast an American commitment to international cross-cultural connection. Those writers-ambassadors may not have helped the state achieve its propaganda goals—indeed, this may prove the case—but they did find their assignments an opportunity to ponder the international meanings and possibilities of US literature. For many of those figures, courted foreign publics inspired a reevaluation of the scope and form of their own literary projects. Testifying to the inadvertent, yet integral, role of cultural diplomacy in the workings of US letters, works like *The Mansion* (1989), *Life Studies* (1959), “Cultural Exchange” (1956, 1967), *Trumpeter Mander: His Fair Book* (1989), and *Three Days Before the Shooting* (2000) reimagined US literature in a mobile, global, and distinctly political register.

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# Telling America's Story to the World

*Literature, Internationalism,  
Cultural Diplomacy*

HARILAOS STECOPOULOS

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## Introduction

In 1969, John Updike published his short story “One of My Generation” in the *New Yorker*. Usually ignored as a minor effort in his massive oeuvre, Updike’s tale warrants attention as a rare literary depiction of a scandal that roiled the intelligentsia during the late 1960s: the secret involvement of the CIA in the cultural sphere. First reported in the *New York Times* (1966) and *Ramparts* magazine (1967), the story exposed CIA financial support for a variety of cultural institutions, from its premier front, the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), to such magazines as the *Paris Review*. Most of the well-known writers affiliated with those covertly subsidized organizations—Stephen Spender (*Encounter*), George Plimpton (*Paris Review*), and Robie Macauley (*Kenyon Review*) among them—claimed to never have been aware of CIA funding, let alone guilty of promoting a pro-US agenda by cultivating the non-communist left.<sup>1</sup> Yet the question of their complicity with cold war propaganda remained. Influential figures seized upon the revelations to challenge the anti-communist imperatives of postwar culture, arguing that writers and artists should not feel pressure to toe any ideological line. More boldly, scholars like Jason Epstein (“The CIA and the Intellectuals” [1967]) and Christopher Lasch (“The Cultural Cold War” [1967]) indicated that the CIA’s clandestine participation in the world of arts and letters pointed to the larger legitimization crisis gripping US culture and society. The exposé of CIA funding was, in this view, nothing less than a crack in the postwar consensus. The subsequent publication of the Pentagon Papers (1971) and media coverage of the Watergate burglary (1972) would render their assessments remarkably prescient.

Updike offers a partial, idiosyncratic but telling response to the controversy in his *New Yorker* piece. “One of My Generation” ignores the issue of covert CIA funding and quietly complicit intellectuals in favor of a more academically oriented plot about literature’s complex relationship to US power. The story begins with an anonymous professor recollecting his college friend Ed Popper, a figure the writer based on Lasch, author of “The Cultural Cold War,” who happened to have been Updike’s Harvard roommate and hence a member of *his* generation.<sup>2</sup> A “master of explication” and a diehard lover of Robert Lowell, Popper endures a miserable time in college until he is plucked from obscurity by a CIA recruiter who recognizes in the student’s love for close reading an aptitude for espionage. Popper draws on his interpretive skills to craft a brilliant government career; as the narrator recounts, the book-drunk schlemiel becomes a

dashing cold warrior. Never one to pass up an opportunity for wit and irony, Updike imagines his ex-roommate Lasch, the learned critic of the government, as a well-read spy in service to the state.

“One of My Generation” is to some degree an example of one alum pranking another, but the tale more significantly draws on Updike’s academic memories to address the relationship between literature, the university, and the government in the international context. Updike stresses this point by having his anonymous narrator frame the story as a fable for youthful anti-war protestors. “Students,” the narrator instructs, “when you revile the ‘power structure’ and storm the Pentagon, you are disturbing a haven of old English majors. It is only Ed Popper in there.” By joking that Popper and other “old English majors” are the sole inhabitants of the edifice, Updike’s narrator imagines the Pentagon as a literary bastion. In storming the Pentagon, he implies, young students don’t so much protest the armed forces as attack lovers of literature. For him, US militarism is a sign of scholarly, particularly literary, endeavor rather than a manifestation of empire. He recounts how Ed dismisses the US presence in Vietnam as “minor” in the same way that he downgrades the poetry of Alexander Pope and Gerard Manley Hopkins. The US is involved in Southeast Asia, explains Ed, only as a matter of “annoying the other side,” not unlike how one might celebrate the virtues of a lesser poet to irk one’s academic peers. And when the narrator claims of himself and his erstwhile roommate, “neither of us, surely, is capable of a ‘political’ act,” he indicates all the more that the United States’ global machinations aren’t so much political, let alone imperial, interventions but something more akin to literary practices.

In certain respects, “One of My Generation” typifies Updike’s attitude toward the Vietnam War and US imperialism more generally. Unlike most contemporary US writers, Updike supported the war, going so far as to defend his view publicly in *Authors Take Sides on Vietnam* (1967). Updike’s notorious conservatism emerges in how his tandem reading of poetry and geopolitical relations reduces the importance of the latter, belittling Vietnam and other small nations in the process. Yet the reverse is the case as well. In this story, poetry doesn’t serve simply as a means of emptying the political of its import but also proves integral to how one should understand the United States in the international frame. Literature and US power are inextricably linked in this CIA tale.<sup>3</sup>

Updike’s conclusion highlights this connection. The story ends with the narrator gazing upon a multi-hued world map, “all those flat warring colors,” and finds himself imagining Ed “in it, a hidden allusion in the poem of the world.” In redefining the map as “the poem of the world,” in making territory lyric, the narrator portrays literature as a cultural force that can change how we understand a fractious globe and, by extension, the nation’s place in it. The “warring colors” become “the poem of the world”; the literary imagination transmutes the visual markers of clashing nations into the harmonious rhythms of internationalism, with the United States figuring prominently in the change. The reference to Ed as

a “hidden allusion” implies that Americans, especially educated readers, play a pivotal role in this transformation of “map” into “poem.” Is Ed an allusion to US power? Does he refer to those other literature enthusiasts, the English professors in the Pentagon? Or is the US portion of the world literary formation represented by “the poem of the world”? In turning to writers, Updike provocatively implies, the US government has not so much availed itself of a new propaganda asset as inadvertently revealed that literature might have a strange power to make readers of all kinds ponder the various figures and texts that make up the nation and the globe.

It is precisely that power of the literary to reimagine and redefine geopolitics that forms the subject of this book. Tracing a genealogy from World War II to the end of the cold war and beyond, I examine how state and state-affiliated agencies deployed US literature overseas for propaganda purposes, seeking to encourage not only a proudly patriotic but also a benevolently internationalist image of the United States.<sup>4</sup> In doing so, I also demonstrate how participating writers responded to their cultural diplomatic assignments by generating writing that responded, often critically, to the nation’s new global power. Typically linked solely to the immediate postwar period and the CIA-funding scandal with which we began, cultural diplomacy played a far more varied and largely unacknowledged role in the making of late twentieth-century US literature. Indeed, the US government’s propaganda apparatus continues to shape US literary culture to this day.<sup>5</sup>

The cold war modernism so pivotal to Updike’s story wasn’t the only literary mode central to the US government’s promotion of an appealing national image abroad.<sup>6</sup> Deployed through both official and private institutions, the state’s instrumentalization of US literature has depended on a surprisingly diverse group of writers, right and left, middlebrow and avant-garde, white and multi-ethnic. While some authors resisted conscription as cultural diplomats, treating such propaganda assignments as inherently antithetical to the literary mission, many others, for a variety of motives, agreed to assist the government. From Thornton Wilder (1940) and Robert Lowell (1952) to Nikki Giovanni (1973) and Julia Alvarez (1995), very different types of writers have worked as literary ambassadors, wielding their literary talent to help the state provide a richer account of US culture to overseas publics. Committed to the idea that US literature had a special role to play in the postwar world, these figures helped create cultural diplomatic programs, permitted their work to be translated and disseminated by state agencies, and traveled abroad to lecture and teach. Some figures—John Steinbeck, William Faulkner, Saul Bellow, and Updike—lent their voices to the state propaganda apparatus in a nationalist spirit, believing to varying degrees that examples of literary achievement could help shore up US leadership around the world. Others—F. O. Matthiessen, Langston Hughes, Arthur Miller, Maxine Hong Kingston—undertook diplomatic service because state cultural diplomacy offered



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them a chance to maintain or forge various versions of internationalism; for this group, US literature could help instantiate progressive global relations antithetical to US power. Regardless of their ideological and aesthetic stance, each writer discovered in his or her cultural diplomatic assignments new reasons to envision diverse and potentially counterhegemonic relations with foreign publics.

The many meta-diplomatic texts that draw and reflect on their creators' propaganda experiences make this manifest. What I call the literature of US diplomacy includes poetry (Lowell's *Life Studies* [1959], Langston Hughes's *Ask Your Mama: 12 Moods for Jazz* [1961], N. Scott Momaday's *The Colors of Night* [1976], Christopher Merrill's *Flares* [2021]); nonfiction (Truman Capote's *The Muses Are Heard* [1956], Arthur Miller's *In Russia* [1969], Paule Marshall's *Triangular Road* [2009]); and fiction (Faulkner's *The Town* [1957], John Updike's *The Coup* [1978], Joyce Carol Oates's "My Warszawa: 1980" [1981], Maxine Hong Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* [1989], Ralph Ellison's *Three Days Before the Shooting* [2010]). Each of these works engages to some degree with what Henry James famously dubbed "the international theme"; we will attend to literary representations of cross-cultural contact in what follows. Yet most cultural diplomatic ventures rarely resulted in deep knowledge about a particular foreign culture. Instead, participating writers usually gained a more complex, sometimes more unsettling, sense of their US affiliation when they traveled to other countries under the imprimatur of the new global hegemon. As a result, many of the literary works that resulted from those experiences ponder the complexities of cultural and political belonging.

The history of cultural diplomacy also demonstrates that ambassadorial work taught writers a good deal about literature's status as a mobile formation. Our usual understanding of "propaganda" as nefarious persuasion obscures the word's root in "propagation," typically defined as "the dissemination, advancement, or promotion of a belief," as transmission and communication.<sup>7</sup> In the words of Russ Castronovo, studying propaganda entails "consideration of the networks . . . that propelled texts and ideas across public and private spaces," and this crucial element of cultural diplomacy was hardly lost on these writers-cum-ambassadors.<sup>8</sup> By working closely with state institutions eager to connect with overseas communities, authors were reminded that US literature's global significance didn't emerge through an unmediated relationship to foreign publics but rather through institutional transmission and dissemination. Many writers grew increasingly sensitive to the fact that any literary intervention in the world required an engagement with the bureaucracy of late modernity. Cultural diplomatic experience offered them an inadvertent lesson in how, as Theodor Adorno puts it, "the 'word 'culture' betrays from the outset the administrative view, the task of which, looking down from on high, is to assemble, distribute, evaluate and organize."<sup>9</sup>

Their exposure to the administrative dimensions of cultural gatekeeping taught writers that any attempt at crafting a literary internationalism demanded attention

to state institutionalism. Authors had ample reason to indict government bureaucracy for everything from ineptitude to censorship, yet at times they also imagined redirecting the state's cultural diplomatic initiatives to more communitarian ends. Literature could, through the inadvertent assistance of official infrastructures, facilitate improved nongovernmental relations across geopolitical borders, thus highlighting the progressive potential latent in state cultural diplomacy. "The benefits of . . . an identification between cultural workers and the nation-state," Bruce Robbins instructs, "might even include . . . the flowering of a particular internationalism that the cultural left has hitherto neglected at its own expense."<sup>10</sup> If the government sought to instrumentalize literature in support of US global hegemony, whether overtly or covertly, US writers sometimes found in their propaganda experience reason to envision new forms of transmission and connection, forms that reconceived the very issues of mutuality central to internationalism in the first place.

### Cold War Modernist Studies

Despite the recent academic interest in imperialism, biopolitics, the prison-industrial complex, and other crucial issues linked to the state, most Americanists usually manifest little if any interest in government propaganda. We tend to assume that propaganda lacks the complexity required of worthy scholarly objects. Why analyze artist Charles Dana Gibson's posters for the Committee on Public Information (1917–19) when you could interpret *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919)? Why study John Steinbeck's *Bombs Away: The Story of a Bomber Team* (1942), a nonfiction work commissioned by the US Air Force, instead of examining *Native Son* (1940)? For many scholars, the US state's relationship to literature and culture demands attention only when issues of censorship and intellectual property are at stake. The juridical evaluation of obscenity in the 1957 trial of *Howl* has inspired important work on the state's repressive role in literary culture—as has the vexed role of copyright in musical sampling. Yet the idea that US state cultural policy and production might also warrant scholarly examination is rarely taken seriously. Thus, cultural policy studies, a major presence in other disciplines, hasn't had much effect on US studies scholarship;<sup>11</sup> and theoretical work on the state's investment in citizen subject formation is only rarely invoked by Americanists of a literary and cultural bent.<sup>12</sup>

The study of cold war cultural diplomacy is the major exception to Americanist uninterest in government propaganda and cultural policy more broadly. Fascinated by the mid-1960s revelations about CIA involvement in the world of art, music, and literature, and, more generally, the various ways that the US government attempted to use culture to combat communism, scholars over the

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past half-century have produced a large number of articles and books on the cultural cold war. Inaugurated by Lasch and others in the mid-1960s, this academic corpus gained force with the appearance of Serge Guibault's *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art* (1985), the first sustained examination of the state's cooptation of abstract expressionist art. By the turn of the millennium, an academic cottage industry emerged that included such important works as Frances Stonor Saunders's *The Cultural Cold War*, David Caute's *The Dancer Defects*, and Andrew Rubin's *Archives of Authority*.<sup>13</sup> Scholarly texts on the cultural cold war differ in their methods and subject matter; they range from historical studies of dance to accounts of particular government agencies to studies of US libraries abroad, but they all share a belief in the value of examining the *Kulturkampf* that belies the usual scholarly neglect of cultural policy.<sup>14</sup> Whether focused on the Congress for Cultural Freedom's funding for *Encounter* and the *Paris Review* or on the State Department's sponsorship of jazz performances, Americanists have identified in the propaganda initiatives of the early cold war a particularly salient example of state involvement in the cultural sphere.

Most cultural diplomatic ventures didn't produce quantifiable results when it came to influencing foreign opinion—propaganda success is hard to define, let alone claim—and, as a result, much of the relevant scholarship focuses on the domestic implications of cold war cultural diplomacy.<sup>15</sup> Emphasizing stateside debates over propaganda practices, scholars have explored in detail how government cold warriors and participating writers and artists understood their contributions to what Marianne Moore dubbed the “combat cultural.”<sup>16</sup> They often have taken modernism as their scholarly touchstone, studying how state officials identified in abstract expressionist paintings or Faulkner's novels a maverick and cosmopolitan aesthetic uniquely well suited for the battle with the Soviet Union and its allies.<sup>17</sup> Above all, scholars have emphasized that cold war modernism proved crucial to the CIA, which boasted such literary-minded administrators as James Jesus Angleton, former editor of *Furioso*, the Yale literary magazine, and chief of the agency's counterintelligence unit; Thomas Braden, a one-time English literature instructor at Dartmouth, who directed the International Organizations Division of the agency; and Cord Meyer, O. Henry Prize winner (1946) and the subsequent director of the International Organizations Division and eventual head of the Covert Action Staff.<sup>18</sup> Under the influence of these figures, the CIA-funded CCF energetically endorsed modernism, whether in its own deeply Eliotic publication *Encounter* or in such events as the “Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century” festival (1952). And CCF did so, according to most scholars, because the organization believed that the formal challenge of an Eliot poem or a Faulkner novel both testified to the unique subjectivity of the artist and elicited from the reader and viewer a heightened sense of individualism and autonomy, values that cold warriors most vigorously wanted to promote in countering the spread of Soviet Marxism. This vision of high modernism may not have extended as

thoroughly to music, theater, and dance—neither the CCF nor any of the other cultural fronts expressed much interest in atonal music, for example<sup>19</sup>—but when it came to the literary realm, most academics agree that the CCF exhibited a presiding investment in the rigorous formalist aesthetics of the early twentieth-century avant-garde, even going so far as to consider dropping Russian translations of Eliot’s *Four Quartets* over the Soviet Union.<sup>20</sup> Irreverent and individualistic, literary modernism could thus be imagined as a weapon in an effective cultural campaign against the suppressions of global communism.

For many literary critics who analyze cold war culture, the state’s investment in modernism looms large because it seems inseparable from the discipline’s long-standing valuation of avant-garde aesthetics. Angleton, Braden, and Meyer are in this view uncanny doubles of English professors who manifested a similar faith in the universalist value of modernist texts.<sup>21</sup> When Lionel Trilling edited and introduced the second issue of *Perspectives USA* (1953), a Ford Foundation–supported quarterly designed to showcase US literary excellence, he demonstrated how influential academics supported the new propaganda regime and its cooptation of modernism.<sup>22</sup> By using his introduction to celebrate “the unmistakable improvement in the American cultural situation of today over that of, say, thirty years ago,” Trilling propagandized on behalf of the anti-communist cause.<sup>23</sup> In the process he also helped legitimate English studies, still a relatively young discipline in the postwar era. Through the dissemination of works by W. H. Auden, e. e. cummings, Ezra Pound, and Wallace Stevens, *Perspectives USA* editors like Trilling and Malcolm Cowley helped open “the door for highbrow modernism’s adoption by the middlebrow,” thus shoring up an academic field focused on elucidating difficult twentieth-century texts.<sup>24</sup> Michael Rogin famously quipped that this was the era in which the CIA was the NEA (National Endowment for the Arts) but for Trilling and other English professors, we might speculate, the state’s cultural cold warriors also approximated the NEH (National Endowment for the Humanities) (16).

Literature professors were hardly the only scholars to benefit from the state’s cultural turn. As Lasch contends in his historical account “The Cultural Cold War,” “Professional intellectuals had become indispensable to society and to the state . . . because the cold war seemed to demand that the United States compete with communism in the cultural sphere.”<sup>25</sup> The growth of other humanities disciplines in the United States also depended to a large degree on the existence of the cultural and educational dimensions of state anti-communism.<sup>26</sup> This was particularly the case with American Studies, another new discipline.<sup>27</sup> Focused on identifying and, to some degree, celebrating national traits and characteristics, American Studies established the United States as a worthy object of domestic scholarship. But it also framed US culture as historically resonant and aesthetically complex, thus suitable for state export in the propaganda conflict with the Soviet Union. Educating foreign publics about such topics as the American Revolution,

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frontier culture, and the realist novel had potential geopolitical as well as academic value during the cold war. In the 1940s and 1950s, the US government helped found American Studies programs in Japan, Germany, Italy, and other nations to promote a positive view of the nation overseas. “The development of American Studies around the world has been thoroughly political,” writes Richard Horowitz, “not just in the sense that it was designed to influence masses of people, but also in that it has been tied to strategic interests of the U.S. government.”<sup>28</sup> To establish the study of the United States as a legitimate discipline in the international context was to encourage acceptance of the United States as a world leader.

Such disciplinary arguments will hardly be news to readers familiar with the work of Tim Melley, Alan Nadel, Donald E. Pease Jr., John Carlos Rowe, and other cold war studies scholars. Thanks to their pioneering research, twenty-first century Americanists are aware that anti-communism played an outsized role in shaping the study of US literature and culture.<sup>29</sup> Most academics rightly find in this history a cautionary tale about conservative political influence over what Rowe has called “the state-scholar network” (“Areas of Concern,” 73). But even as any analysis of state power—cultural or otherwise—requires a jaundiced eye, we should recognize that the government’s relationship to the literary did not always result in the successful manipulation of writers and intellectuals. An exclusive focus on censorship and exploitation occludes the possibility of identifying a less one-sided relationship between the state and literary culture, at home or abroad.<sup>30</sup> This is particularly important to our understanding of dissent and resistance in the propaganda arena. Namely, by training our eyes on cultural diplomacy, we find an important means of recovering the progressive globalism that, as Gordon Hutner points out, has been, “historiographically squelched, rendered invisible” in US literary studies since the late 1940s.<sup>31</sup> As we shall see, for all the top-down control exerted by the anti-communist state, writers sometimes took from their propaganda service something other than a predictable acceptance of their government, and they sometimes used that experience as a basis for the creation of new internationalist art.<sup>32</sup>

Cultivating a method that attends to alternative internationalisms both despite and because of state institutional power necessitates a reconsideration of cultural diplomacy’s archive. For most academics, cultural diplomacy only takes consequential form with the rise of the cold war, whether in the 1950 founding of the Congress for Cultural Freedom or in the 1953 creation of the US Information Agency, and then fades in importance with the CIA-funding scandal of the late 1960s. Cultural diplomacy in this period is usually understood as dominated by cold war modernism—or, better, CIA modernism—and this assumption urges scholars to adopt a hermeneutics of suspicion in their analyses. But paranoid reading is less well suited to the more capacious historical archive addressed in this book: texts that range from the inception of the Good Neighbor cultural policy (1933) to the end of the cold war (1991) and the ongoing War on Terror

(2001–). A more flexible interpretive approach is required when examining 1950s cultural anti-communism as one part of a changing political context that includes a number of different anti-totalitarian discourses and a range of alternative internationalisms as well. The consequences are equally significant in terms of literary aesthetics. With a broader historical purview, the relevant archive expands to include a range of styles, including middlebrow, modernist, multiethnic, and postmodernist. The writings of Eliot, Faulkner, Hughes, and other titans of the twentieth-century avant-garde still loom large in this new orientation, but, as I will demonstrate, the longer timeline also challenges the primacy of modernism in our understanding of the state's complex relationship to the literary.

Scholars eager to challenge the Eurocentric emphasis of cold war modernist studies have for some time recognized the value of a larger archive. Hemispheric specialists Deborah Cohn, Claire Fox, and Harris Feinsod have well demonstrated the need to turn to the 1930s, and perhaps even earlier, to appreciate more fully the beginnings of the state's interest in fostering new cultural relations with Caribbean and Central and South American nations.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, cultural historians like Brian Edwards and Penny Von Eschen have argued compellingly for the importance of extending the study of US cultural diplomacy beyond the 1950s and into geographic regions (the Middle East, Africa) far from the predictable terrain associated with the high tide of the cold war.<sup>34</sup> Both groups of scholars find in a more expansive historicist approach an opportunity to look beyond the predictable Western locales of cultural diplomacy studies to sites in the developing world. For them, the adoption of a longer timeline proves coterminous with a rejection of an exclusively Western geography.

Regrettably, such challenges to Eurocentric cultural diplomatic studies have largely demanded a disavowal of the literary. With the notable exception of work by Cohn, Edwards, and Feinsod, the more expansive studies extenuate or omit the place of literature in cultural diplomatic studies, preferring instead to foreground the complex contributions of jazz, film, and painting to the state's propaganda programs. Musicians, filmmakers, and painters figure prominently in an expanded cultural diplomacy archive, but writers also deserve the attention they are due. Literary culture has played a central role in the history of US cultural diplomacy. Novelists have showcased American achievement by winning global awards (e.g., Faulkner's Nobel Prize). Government officials have pushed the idea of a lingua Americana by disseminating ESL (English as a Second Language) editions of classic American texts (e.g., the State Department's abridged version of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* [1993]); and playwrights have staged their works abroad (e.g., Arthur Miller's Beijing production of *Death of a Salesman* [1983]).<sup>35</sup> Most important of all, many authors have supported various forms of internationalism, whether through political organizations or in expatriate communities, and this commitment made literary culture central to a US propaganda apparatus invested in rhetorics of mutuality and global connection.

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## Liberal Internationalism and Cultural Diplomacy

It should hardly come as a surprise that the postwar US state sought to redefine the national image in a benevolently internationalist mode. What Alfred, Lord Tennyson famously dubbed “the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world” in “Locksley Hall” (1835) has long been linked to expressions of national power, and the United States is no exception.<sup>36</sup> Although one can trace the origins of an inchoate version of liberal internationalism to the Middle Ages—witness Dante’s *On World Government* (1312–13)—the dream of forging through connection and cooperation a peaceful and distinctly profitable relationship among nations fully emerged during the Enlightenment. Figuring crucially in this history are intellectuals like Jeremy Bentham, who in 1789 coined the word “international” as part of the phrase “international jurisprudence” to more accurately describe the “law of nations.”<sup>37</sup> For Bentham, the word “international” emerged out of a desire to cultivate a stable and civil world order, if for reasons that had more to do with fostering Western economic prosperity than with promoting world peace. Bentham would be followed by such contemporaries as Immanuel Kant (*Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* [1795]) and other Enlightenment philosophers eager to encourage “a more interdependent, cooperative, and mutually tolerant” relationship among the world’s many peoples.<sup>38</sup>

The United States may seem to be an exception to this Western intellectual and political history. From Washington’s indictment of “entangling alliances” to the creation of the America First Committee (1940), the story goes, Americans have been eager to distance themselves from the international sphere, eschewing a foreign policy of proactive globalism. Yet scholars like Akira Iriye and Emily Rosenberg have argued persuasively that US isolationism was an exaggeration obscuring the nation’s sustained engagement with the world.<sup>39</sup> In their view, the United States from its earliest roots endorsed the free trade implications of internationalism, while it also claimed a religious calling, desiring to share with the world the benefits of Christian civilization. When John Winthrop famously stated in 1630, “We shall be as a City upon a Hill,” he felt compelled to follow that bold claim with the assertion, “The eyes of all people are upon us.”<sup>40</sup> This new Christian society aimed to inspire foreign publics, and the American version of the civilizing mission soon followed.

The US version of internationalism first took the Western hemisphere as its focus, with the Monroe Doctrine (1823) marking a deliberately circumscribed geography. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, Americans began looking farther afield, to the Pacific Rim and to Asia, for new spaces of global outreach. Served by Christian missionaries and educators who sought to convert and thus “save” foreign peoples, these nineteenth-century programs testified both to the US reluctance to engage in typical European-style imperialism and to an unrelenting faith in the nation’s obligation to share its exceptionalist vision with the world.

Thus, the Ottoman Empire, in no way a major target of US economic imperialism, by the early twentieth century hosted fifty-four US Protestant high schools.<sup>41</sup> Such seemingly altruistic projects trafficked in colonial paternalism and contributed consciously or otherwise to deeply uneven relations between the US and foreign communities throughout Africa, Asia, and the Americas. The more modern version of liberal internationalism, promulgated by such powerful figures as the industrialist Andrew Carnegie, Secretary of State Elihu Root, President William Henry Taft, and President Woodrow Wilson, similarly affirmed the need for global unity and peace, on the one hand, and legitimated US expansion in non-Western parts of the world, on the other. This tendency would persist intermittently throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The United States may have declined to join the League of Nations in 1920, but what we might call imperial internationalism still played an important role in US foreign policy throughout the modern era.<sup>42</sup>

That modern iterations of US internationalism frequently borrow from domestic liberalism might seem to challenge this imperial association. After all, as Michael Bentley points out, “liberals are supposed to believe in liberation not servitude, in emancipation not colonization, in the rights of peoples and nations to govern themselves.”<sup>43</sup> Affirming such assumptions, US liberals frequently assume that the national valuation of pluralism provides their nation with a benevolent relationship to internationalism well removed from any impulse to dominate other communities. As philosopher John Dewey argued in 1918,

It is no accident that the conceptions of a world federation, a concert of nations, a supreme tribunal, a league of nations to enforce peace, are peculiarly American contributions. They are conceptions which spring directly out of our own experience, which we have already worked out and tested on a smaller scale in our own political life. Leaders of other nations may regard them as iridescent dreams; we know better, for we have actually tried them.<sup>44</sup>

In Dewey’s view, liberal pluralism has endowed the United States with a unique capacity to show the world how diverse peoples can live together in peace. The United States is, for him, “truly international in” its “internal constitution,” a nation that reflected the globe in democratic miniature (287).

Eager to locate the world in America, and America in the world, neither Dewey nor his fellow pluralist internationalists—Jane Addams, Archibald MacLeish, Bill Clinton, and many others—acknowledge how this type of nationalist narrative ignores liberalism’s failure to recognize and enfranchise marginalized subjects at home. For all of American democracy’s purported inclusivity, millions of citizens have found themselves alienated and disconnected from the imagined community. The modern US state’s affirmation of diversity has hardly stopped the manipulation of, in Lauren Berlant’s apt formulation, “the historical conditions



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of legal and social belonging . . . to serve the concentration of economic, racial, and sexual power in the society's ruling blocs."<sup>45</sup> And those "ruling blocs" have in the twentieth century grown increasingly aware that rhetorics of national pluralism can jump scale and potentially pay global dividends of influence and power. In Dewey's account, the nation's violent denial of Black and Indigenous communities, as well as other people of color, is eclipsed by a fiction of diversity and inclusion that is then leveraged to legitimate US global hegemony. By broadcasting its supposed respect for all domestic populations, the United States asserts an exceptional claim on world leadership that largely benefits the national elite.

Activists within and without the nation have long been attuned to the falsity of these internationalist claims. In the same way that US citizens of color are all too cognizant of the potentially malignant nature of liberal statist attempts at uplift and social change—*The Moynihan Report* (1965) and Clinton's "Welfare to Work" bill (1996) come to mind—communities of the global South are well aware that the metropole's supposedly well-intentioned interventions often create more problems than they solve. As Samuel Moyn has recently suggested, liberal internationalism has become something of a synonym for largely unsuccessful US attempts at nation-building, whether in Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo, or Iraq.<sup>46</sup> Little wonder, then, that for many of the world's poorest communities, the recent history of the UN is in large part a disappointing record of support for US and Western hegemony. "Given the U.N.'s role in Afghanistan and Iraq in the prior decade, and its growing role in global counterterrorism," write Charles T. Call, David Crow, and James Ron, "people across the global South see the U.N. as reflecting colonial-style intervention."<sup>47</sup> If pluralism often has redounded to the maintenance of hegemony at home, it has accomplished much the same result on the global scale. The failures of US domestic liberalism and the failures of US-led liberal internationalism are deeply intertwined.

These long-standing connections to disenfranchisement and violence give ample reason to look askance at liberal internationalism and its effect on US relations with the world. Any diplomatic mission, cultural or otherwise, hoping to draw from such a legacy is presumably compromised from the outset. Yet to affirm such problematic components of liberal internationalism hardly means we should jettison what Patricia Clavin and Glenda Sluga call "the idea of internationalism as a conduit for pacifism and humanitarianism," particularly at a time when various forms of ethno-nationalism and authoritarianism have grown increasingly prevalent throughout the globe.<sup>48</sup> We should remember that, even as liberal internationalism emerged from an Enlightenment preoccupation with global order and prosperity, and frequently has informed imperial aggression, it also helped inspire an aspirational idea of a fully inclusive world community. As Richard Falk writes, internationalism at its core "draws upon a long tradition of thought and feeling about the ultimate unity of human experience, giving rise to a politics of desire that posits for the planet . . . a set of conditions of peace and

justice and sustainability.”<sup>49</sup> In this vision, a sense of belonging no longer depends on the othering of a particular internal or external population. Instead, the human impulse to demonize and destroy in the name of homogeneous community is supplanted by “the pull of obligations to assist one another” while respecting difference.<sup>50</sup> Unity takes shape through an expression of care toward all subjects that refuses any limit other than the planetary.

To be sure, this is a utopian ideal, and, as such, sometimes inspires scholars to dismiss internationalism as irrelevant in a world still dominated by the nation-state. For this reason, many academics interested in theories of global community have privileged ideas of revolutionary internationalism and third world internationalism that critique hegemonic political formations.<sup>51</sup> The prospect of momentous social change figures prominently in both categories, with radicals like Karl Marx, V. I. Lenin, and Rosa Luxemburg important to the former, and revolutionaries like W. E. B. Du Bois, Amílcar Cabral, and Audre Lorde crucial to the latter. Marginalized if not persecuted by most Western governments, these iconoclastic thinkers and activists looked beyond the existing parameters of the nation-state to reimagine citizenship and community via “a politics that flows through the grooves cut across the planet by colonialism.”<sup>52</sup> From the First International (1864) to the Bandung Conference (1956) and beyond, left conceptions and instantiations of global connection have proven central to our understanding of power and resistance.<sup>53</sup> Some of the most significant contributions to twentieth-century theories of internationalism have their origins not in the liberal dream of a Parliament of Man but in the communist imperative “workers of the world unite.”

But even as revolutionary internationalism and third-world internationalism rightly command academic attention, we would be wrong to dismiss liberal internationalism as always marginal to or oppressive of political and cultural struggle.<sup>54</sup> Liberal nongovernmental institutions from the UN to the World Health Organization and Amnesty International have, despite their faults, sometimes contributed to social change through “opportunities that may have been opened up, even unintentionally, for non-elite actors” (Clavin and Sluga, 9). Through these institutions, activists have intermittently managed to, in Nancy Fraser’s words, “expand discursive space” so that some “assumptions that were previously exempt from contestation” would “have to be publicly argued out.”<sup>55</sup> To take one example, it is difficult to imagine William Patterson and Paul Robeson of the Civil Rights Congress indicting the United States for acts of genocide against African Americans in 1951 without the existence of the United Nations as a global forum where such charges might resonate and gain traction. As Patterson emphasizes in his introduction to *We Charge Genocide* (1951), the supranational standing of the United Nations enabled the petition: “These crimes are of the gravest concern to mankind. The General Assembly of the United Nations, by reason of the United Nations Charter and the Genocide Convention,

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itself is invested with power to receive this indictment and act on it.”<sup>56</sup> It is precisely because the UN had the capacity to judge the actions of individual nations that Patterson and Robeson expected the organization to acknowledge and respond to their document. The US government worked hard to marginalize the petition, marshaling NAACP leaders and Eleanor Roosevelt against the Civil Rights Congress initiative, but not before the entire world was reminded of the United States’ violent treatment of its Black citizens.<sup>57</sup> In this case, a liberal internationalist institution enabled a critique of domestic liberalism. The US government’s growing awareness of Jim Crow as a national vulnerability in the global context emerged in part from Patterson and Robeson’s UN intervention.

The history of US cultural diplomacy testifies in complicated ways to how we might understand liberal internationalism as a contested discourse with progressive political potential. When, in 1938, the federal government created the Division for International Communications and the Division of Cultural Relations (DCR), it added a new version of internationalism as soft power to what had been, until then, internationalism as de facto economic and military imperialism.<sup>58</sup> In the process, it also opened up new spaces for discussion and debate regarding hemispheric American relations. This change was opportunistic, reflecting the government’s strategic decision to adopt a lighter hemispheric touch in countering German propaganda campaigns in South America. But even as geopolitical imperatives motivated the state to encourage what Ben Cherrington, director of the DCR, dubbed “the free flow of ideas and cultural production,” the Good Neighbor Policy (1933) also legitimated a more flexible foreign policy lexicon that emphasized the value of cultural communication and harmonious relations alongside—and in lieu of—gunboats and big sticks.<sup>59</sup> This lexicon sometimes allowed for the articulation of Latin American resistance even as it also stifled insurgent expression. As contemporary debates on the autonomy and potential independence of Puerto Rico demonstrate, the Good Neighbor Policy could both incite and suppress new political discourse.<sup>60</sup>

The pluralist inflection of liberal internationalism that informed the Good Neighbor Policy became more influential through new institutions like the Office of War Information (1942–45), the State Department’s Office of International Information and Cultural Affairs (1946–), and the USIA (1953–99). Pluralism subtended an internationalist emphasis on befriending heterogeneous foreign publics, but it also licensed the state employment of an astonishing array of figures in the new cultural diplomatic institutions—communist novelists (e.g., Howard Fast and the World War II-era Voice of America), African American integrationist journalists (Carl Rowan, director of the USIA [1964–66]), and Asian American activist writers (Kingston and the President Carter-era US International Communication Association)—many of whom contested, in distinctive ways, the idea of an American Century. As its conservative detractors never tired of pointing out, in deploying a diverse group of

amateur ambassadors (writers, intellectuals, artists) to engage with overseas communities, the cultural diplomatic apparatus came close to fomenting subversion. The state cooptation of liberal internationalism through the mechanisms of cultural diplomacy was mainly meant to buttress US power, but its quotidian practice had the potential to generate other outcomes.

This hegemonic interest in liberal internationalism extended to state-affiliated cultural diplomatic institutions. Liam Kennedy and Scott Lucas have demonstrated how the covert creation of a “state-private network” offered cold warriors a means of disavowing the charge of official propaganda while still promoting anti-communism in foreign locales.<sup>61</sup> The CCF is the most famous example of an institution pivotal to this “network,” but the state also lent financial and logistical support to lesser known cultural diplomatic organizations and related initiatives. For all their important differences, the Council on Books in Wartime, the Salzburg Seminar for American Civilization, the CCF, the People-to-People Program, the American Society of African Culture, the Dartmouth US-Soviet Union Conference, American PEN and PEN International (particularly during the Arthur Miller years), the International Writing Program at Iowa, and the US-China Writers’ Conferences depended to varying degrees on state financing and logistical support. Their nongovernmental status was often something of a convenient fiction. Yet these institutions also shared an intermittent capacity to maintain a distance from the government, if only for public relations purposes, thus allowing them to facilitate a cosmopolitan, if not internationalist, discourse that encompassed a range of disparate political and aesthetic positions.<sup>62</sup> Largely dedicated to promoting the United States and opposing totalitarianism, particularly communism, those organizations’ public affirmations of global mutuality and connection sometimes led to support for other forms of expression. Even Irving Kristol and Stephen Spender, co-editors of the CCF’s main magazine, *Encounter*, felt compelled to acknowledge the appeal of global connection when they claimed in their first editorial statement that they understood the value of “diversity” and also recognized the importance of challenging “the dominion of national pride in a world where the nation is plainly an anachronism.”<sup>63</sup> Kristol and Spender’s affirmation of cosmopolitanism hardly translated into an alternative internationalism when it came to *Encounter*’s editorial policy, but their comment does remind us that the extensive and varied network of CCF-sponsored journals sometimes enabled a small measure of dissent.<sup>64</sup>

### US Writers in the World

The state’s newfound interest in soft power did not mean that writers immediately proved eager to serve as propagandists, but a long-standing US literary fascination with internationalism undoubtedly helped set the stage. From Herman Melville’s

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description of the *Pequod's* crew as a “deputation from all the isles of the sea, and all the ends of the earth” in *Moby-Dick*, to Henry James’s characterization of the cosmopolitan Madame Merle in *The Portrait of a Lady*, nineteenth-century US writers produced distinctive accounts of global belonging. More surprisingly, as Brian Roberts and Brook Thomas have each demonstrated, some influential authors of the era engaged with the world by serving as US diplomats. Witness Frederick Douglass’s work as minister to Haiti (1889–91) and James Russell Lowell’s service as ambassador to Great Britain (1880–85).<sup>65</sup> The legacy of nineteenth-century internationalism and diplomacy assumed even greater import in the twentieth century, as the concurrent, sometimes overlapping draw of bohemian cultural formations, on the one hand, and left political commitments, on the other, shaped rhetorics of global community that were more influential with US *littérateurs* than ever before. Sparked by the US involvement in World War I, US writers gained new awareness of their connection to the world, and for many the allure of the global avant-garde, already well in evidence during the 1910s, proved hard to resist. Such privileged white Americans as Djuna Barnes, T. S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway, Ezra Pound, and others left home for the European metropolises, affirming the value of expatriate identity in the process. For these writers, modernism and cosmopolitanism went hand in hand. Left writers and intellectuals also claimed a sense of international identity during the early twentieth century—the thrilling example of the Russian Revolution demanded as much—but only with the creation of the left-liberal Popular Front in 1935 did such literati as John Dos Passos, Langston Hughes, and Richard Wright devote themselves to a substantive global political and cultural formation. Dedicated to the struggle against fascism, the Popular Front insisted on recognizing US experience as connected to the experience of foreign communities, particularly oppressed ones. By understanding literature and culture in global terms, the bohemians of the Left Bank and the partisans of the Lincoln Brigade transformed their experiences into a richer, more diverse US literary internationalism.<sup>66</sup>

Some globally oriented writers found in the state’s newfound interest in soft power reason enough to join in this endeavor, particularly once the United States entered World War II. The enormous expansion of the propaganda apparatus during the early 1940s led to the hiring of modernist and left-leaning figures (Malcolm Cowley, MacLeish, Charles Olson, Muriel Rukeyser) and middlebrow and liberal authors (Stephen Vincent Benét, Pearl Buck, Carl Sandburg, William Saroyan, John Steinbeck, Thornton Wilder). And writers continued to serve an ever-changing propaganda apparatus with the advent of the cold war, including Faulkner, Katherine Anne Porter, and Tennessee Williams, all of whom took on one or more cultural diplomatic initiatives. But there were also difficulties that troubled the newfound relationship between writers and these propaganda vehicles. During the early 1940s, left writers like Cowley were forced out of the Office

of Facts and Figures as a result of their association with communism; and liberals like Olson resigned from the Office of War Information in protest over censorship. Other writers rejected completely the state's entreaties to assist with cultural diplomacy. In the postwar period, both Eliot and Wright, two very different modernists, adamantly refused to serve: Eliot, because he believed state affiliation undermined aesthetics; Wright, because he didn't want to contribute to the perpetuation of white supremacy abroad, much less at home. For all the many US writers who agreed to lend their talent to US propaganda, many others couldn't abide the idea.

Moreover, among those writers who did take up the call to act as unofficial diplomats, most had very little experience with—or, interest in—the state. Indeed, their positions required them to work with institutions that sometimes seemed almost as alien as the foreign countries they would visit. Upon receiving a letter from the State Department, for example, Paule Marshall treated it as evidence of government harassment until she discovered it was an invitation to be a literary ambassador.<sup>67</sup> Even when writers felt less intimidated by the strangeness of the domestic institutional landscape—the situation of most white men—they frequently found themselves confounded by the burden of having to find their way through both US and foreign bureaucracies when abroad. John Updike ran into such problems during his 1964 trip to the communist bloc, an experience he exploited for comedic effect in “Bech in Rumania,” a tale in which the titular character finds himself trapped between the double-speak and dead ends of competing state apparatuses.<sup>68</sup> Inasmuch as navigating state and state-affiliated institutions proved tantamount to navigating a foreign country, the practice of cultural exchange sometimes seemed to refer as much to writers connecting with bureaucratic officials as it did to one nation communicating with another.

Yet for all the institutional challenges, many writers found in their propaganda service an opportunity to articulate alternative global connections that made manifest the communitarian potential of liberal internationalism. Leslie Fiedler, writing in 1952 during a Fulbright Fellowship in Italy, captures how the official US cultural diplomatic apparatus unintentionally enhanced aesthetic and political diversity through its support for travel. In a statement contrasting the early twentieth century and the postwar era, Fiedler opined, “The departing intellectual does not take flight under cover of a barrage of manifestoes, but is sent abroad on a Fulbright grant.”<sup>69</sup> Fiedler's comment references the cooptation of a once-scandalous avant-garde, yet it also reminds us of the irony that government bureaucrats offered postwar writers and critics the chance to travel throughout the world, cultivating new connections in the process. Literary ambassadorships might seem less conducive to such possibilities, given the involvement of government officials, but the very fact that cultural diplomacy depended in many cases on the travel of US authors to politically volatile sites—Faulkner to Japan (1955),

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Hughes to newly independent Ghana (1961), Miller to the Soviet Union (1967)—meant that these writers enjoyed a greater chance to express themselves internationally outside the purview of official foreign policy.

Of course, literary figures rarely have had the media celebrity needed to find truly public platforms in their diplomatic work. As Winfried Fluck has pointed out, even the most famous US authors generally address small groups of foreign elites.<sup>70</sup> Little wonder, then, that the import of postwar literary ambassadors is usually understood in light of their adherence or resistance to anti-communist imperatives rather than their articulation of alternate perspectives. Limited to a small audience when abroad, US writers didn't have the chance to make their voices heard on the global stage outside existing cold war parameters. Or so we usually assume. Yet what writers lacked in popular availability, they often compensated for by drawing from their propaganda experience ideas that animated subsequent political and creative work. The results of such ripostes to the cultural diplomatic apparatus could at times lead to activism, if in a somewhat quieter register than that demonstrated by world-famous jazz musicians like Louis Armstrong and Dizzy Gillespie. For example, N. Scott Momaday didn't use his ambassadorial status to publicly decry US racism as Armstrong famously did in 1957 when refusing to travel to the Soviet Union during the Little Rock school crisis.<sup>71</sup> Yet the Indigenous writer did draw on his 1974 Fulbright Fellowship to the Soviet Union to craft *The Colors of Night* (1976), a volume of poetry, and, more provocatively, to cultivate a connection to the Indigenous people of Siberia that rejected the white supremacy of both nations. Over the following decade, Momaday would connect Native writers across the cold war divide, finding through cultural diplomacy the means of creating a literary bridge linking the continents. This bond would eventually result in an important literary collaboration between Momaday and the Indigenous Siberian writer Yuri Vaella.<sup>72</sup>

This example is hardly anomalous. From the 1940s to our own era, US literary culture is rich with politically resonant works inspired by cultural diplomatic experience. Alfred Kazin's "Salzburg: Seminar in the Ruins" (1948), Sam Greenlee's *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (1969), and Allen Ginsberg's "Reading Bai Juyi" (1984) are only a few of the relevant examples. For many of these writers, accepting the propaganda duty of courting foreign publics wasn't so much an opportunity to promote the United States as it was a chance to rethink the literary in a global register.<sup>73</sup> While they may not have agreed completely with longtime internationalist and ex-*Saturday Review* editor Norman Cousins's claim that "writers more than any other group . . . can help people transcend the tribalism that is such a morose characteristic of the modern world," they did believe that fiction and poetry had a special role to play in late modernity.<sup>74</sup> Cultural diplomacy figured decisively in how postwar authors created and understood American literature in the world.<sup>75</sup>

## The Literature of US Diplomacy

Centered on six historical case studies drawn from the 1940s through the 1980s, *Telling America's Story to the World* argues that much of postwar American literature is a literature of diplomacy that addresses the need for alternative internationalisms during an era of unprecedented US global power. Each chapter focuses on how cultural diplomatic service, frequently overseas, impacted writers' literary works, inspiring them to respond creatively to the challenge of connecting disparate communities across lines of geopolitical division. Those literary ambassadors may not have generated an Updikean "poem of the world"; the specific circumstances of propaganda rarely excited such totalizing visions. But they did produce essays, novels, plays, and poems that sought to reimagine cultural exchange as something more than an idealistic sham that the state manipulated for its own ends. At its most productive, cultural diplomacy was for these writers a way of roiling conversations about difference and belonging. If the state and its affiliates sent literari abroad under the imprimatur of liberal pluralism, those writers sometimes responded by redefining pluralism as a far more radical and unsettling capacity to embrace diversity on a planetary scale.

Chapter 1, "The Good Neighbor Theory of American Literature: Archibald MacLeish and the 'New World' of the United Nations," addresses these issues by focusing on a writer whose reframing of US literature as international literature took shape as he helped create the state's first major cultural diplomatic apparatus. During the early 1940s, MacLeish's many administrative posts—librarian of Congress, director of the Office of Facts and Figures, assistant secretary of state—established him as a minister of culture cum propagandist who employed US literature as a way of influencing foreign publics, particularly in the Western hemisphere. Rather than promote a nationalist perspective, MacLeish drew from his experience with the Good Neighbor Policy to frame US writing as *American* writing, exploring through his work the myriad ways in which writers from various hemispheric nations shared historical, thematic, and aesthetic connections. The chapter analyzes several of MacLeish's essays on cultural exchange in the transnational American frame and then focuses in depth on *The American Story* (1944), a radio play he wrote in collaboration with the poet Muna Lee that locates the meaning of US literature in early modern narratives of contact between European explorers and the First Peoples of the Americas. For MacLeish, these troubling colonialist texts hold vital lessons for the war-torn 1940s, because they demonstrate how writers can transmute traumatic violence and dislocation into resonant art capable of uniting disparate communities. Hemispheric American literature is exceptional to the degree that it takes from a disturbing legacy invaluable lessons about intercultural contact. Indisputably imperialist and propagandistic, MacLeish's dream of a collective narrative of the Americas would nonetheless have significant political and institutional consequences, as it



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informed his participation in the creation of the United Nations (1945) and UNESCO (1945).

The aftermath of World War II also plays an important role in my second chapter, “‘*Chau*-vin-ism! Con-*form*-ity! Self-de-termi-*nation*! Freeeeeeece-*dom*!': Ralph Ellison, Robert Lowell, and Occupied Salzburg.” Highlighting the close physical proximity of the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies to its neighbor, a large US Army base in northwest Austria, I examine how Ellison and Lowell used their seminar teaching and subsequent writing to critique the unsettling imperial bonds linking these two US institutions. While the school and the base were connected in any number of ways, for both writers this national assemblage was shown most powerfully through the problem of the color line, all too palpable in the miserable treatment of Black GIs by the army brass, and in the infrequent appointment of Black academics by the seminar's administrators. Lowell proved mainly compatible with the seminar's dominant racial politics, teaching an exclusively white canon to his students in the summer of 1952. Ellison, conversely, insisted on assigning a substantially African American reading list during the summer of 1954. But in the aftermath of their respective experiences, both writers turned to the figure of the Black soldier as the means by which they could take stock of what US literary ambassadorship might represent for the United States and the world. The bulk of the chapter focuses on Lowell's and Ellison's creative responses to teaching at the seminar. I read Lowell's “A Mad Negro Soldier Confined at Munich,” a poem from *Life Studies* about Lowell's incarceration in a military mental hospital after a Salzburg breakdown, in tandem with a Salzburg scene from Ellison's unfinished novel, *Three Days Before the Shooting*, during which a Black paratrooper attempts to educate an unstable Boston poet about national belonging, only to have hysteria ensue. In both cases, literary ambassadorship leads to an American psychological crisis, not American leadership. Despite their many differences, both Ellison and Lowell demonstrate through their writing that cultural diplomacy doesn't so much validate American pluralism as inadvertently reveal how the American Century relies on the threat of violence to enforce the hegemonic hierarchy of peoples, within and without the nation.

The attempts at international connection pursued by MacLeish and by the Salzburg Seminar would reach their presidential apotheosis in Eisenhower's decision to lend the authority of his office to an unofficial cultural diplomatic initiative, the People-to-People Program (PTP). A massive enterprise that drew on a full range of professions, the literary committee of the program took William Faulkner as its chair, and this unusual circumstance prompted the defiantly anti-institutional novelist first to deride and then to incorporate into his fiction the accessible globalism typified by the president's cultural diplomatic venture. In “People to People, Writers to Writers: William Faulkner, the Snopes Problem, and Middlebrow Internationalism,” I demonstrate how the novelist drew on some of

the PTP ideals in representing the Snopes family as injurious to a positive national image in *The Town* (1957) and *The Mansion* (1959). Eager to confront the greed of Flem Snopes and his relations, V. K. Ratliff and Gowan Stevens assume a more universalist outlook which finds in art and culture a vehicle for creating community. That these communities prove to be inchoate and temporary—a gathering at a drugstore soda fountain, a conversation about difficult modern art—conveys Faulkner's reluctance to fully endorse state cultural diplomacy. Yet, in the aftermath of what was an abortive experience with Eisenhower's program, Faulkner turned to creating his own cultural diplomatic initiatives through the William Faulkner Foundation (1960), a program that eventually contributed to US-Latin American literary connections.

The next three chapters focus mainly on writers who found in the infrastructures and institutions of cultural diplomacy an opportunity to articulate a more overt critique of US global power and express a more progressive version of liberal internationalism. Chapter 4, "Diasporic Diplomacy: Langston Hughes, the Africa Propaganda Campaign, and Black Literary Internationalism," exemplifies this shift. If Faulkner wrestled with the White House vision of middlebrow internationalism by imagining its domestic iteration, Hughes, the foremost African American literary ambassador of the early to mid-1960s, adopted the converse approach, moving almost as fluidly across a dizzying array of state and state-supported institutions as he had across nations and continents during his heyday as a well-traveled modernist. The US government's growing interest in newly independent African nations gave Hughes this opportunity, and he embraced it eagerly, undertaking missions for the USIA, the State Department, the American Society of African Culture, and the CCF. I argue that Hughes's aptly titled poem "Cultural Exchange" (1961) manifests his impulse to use state institutional means for Black diasporic ends, as he lyricizes the challenges and opportunities confronting a Black writer representing the United States abroad. The chapter concludes with a brief examination of Hughes's performance of "Cultural Exchange" at the first National Poetry Festival (1962) in Washington, DC.

Chapter 5, "Republic of Letters, Cockpit of Controversy: Arthur Miller, PEN International, and Literary Détente," turns to the question of literary ambassadorship behind the Iron Curtain by examining how a left-liberal writer used his bully pulpit as president of a literary organization to publicize the persecution of authors in the communist bloc. Intent on finding in cultural bonds a means of reducing superpower tensions, Miller attempted to promote an idea of literary détente during his 1967 trip to the Soviet Union and his 1969 trip to Czechoslovakia, only to realize the limits of PEN's power. In this chapter, I examine the two texts to which these trips gave rise—the nonfiction work *In Russia* (1969) and the play *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977)—to understand how Miller drew from his experience new insights into the social meaning of literature. Focusing as much on the domestic as on the international context, Miller

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identified in the vulnerable position of literati behind the Iron Curtain a cause that might, however inadvertently, also draw attention to the beleaguered position of authors in the West. For Miller, I contend, American writers should champion the cause of their censored and oppressed communist counterparts both to highlight human rights crimes and to shore up the flagging importance of literary culture in the capitalist world.

Miller attempted a literary intervention into US-USSR relations during a period of relative openness between the two nations. A similar moment of cultural and ideological “thaw” stands at the heart of Chapter 6, “A Harvest of Conversations Among Multitudes’: Maxine Hong Kingston, Wittman Ah Sing, and the US-China Writers’ Conferences.” With the exception of such venerable modernists as Katherine Anne Porter, female writers didn’t figure prominently in state and state-affiliated cultural diplomacy until the 1980s. But the presence of Kingston and other eminent authors like Toni Morrison and Leslie Marmon Silko in these trans-Pacific events augured a change. First staged in 1982 by Norman Cousins, the US-China Writers’ conferences brought together male and female writers from both nations in hopes of generating a bond that might improve relations between the two polarized countries. An extraordinary roster of authors participated, but Kingston was the only figure who contributed actively to three of four conferences, a multi-year experience that helped shape her literary activity in the 1980s and beyond. The chapter examines how Kingston articulates a boldly multilateral conception of literary exchange through Wittman Ah Sing, protagonist of her 1989 novel *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book*, a work she completed at the 1988 conference in China. As the tension between the title and the name of its titular character indicates, this novel places pressure on the very idea of the Chinese American by reframing that hybrid identity in a global context. Unhappy with US pluralist discourse, Wittman seeks to navigate his subjectivity by pondering the uses of transportation and cultural infrastructures to generate new conceptions of community. His various attempts to bond through literature on a bus, a plane, and in a theatrical production eventually lead him to articulate a utopian vision of cultural exchange in which nations swap everyone and everything. I end the chapter with a brief examination of how this multifarious understanding of cultural diplomacy informs Kingston’s creation of the Veterans Writing Project, a series of workshops for survivors of violence that redefined literary internationalism in a therapeutic mode.

The end of the cold war led to the closing of the USIA in 1999 and a shrinking commitment to cultural diplomacy, but the attacks on September 11, 2001, inspired a resurgence of state interest in winning hearts and minds, particularly in the Arab world. My coda turns to the role of Arab American writers in the global public relations campaigns of both the George W. Bush administration and the Barack Obama administration. Taking State Department online publications as my archive, I demonstrate how the government tried to establish spoken-word

artist Suheir Hammad, poet Elmaz Abinader, and other Arab American *littérateurs* as de facto propagandists for the “War on Terror,” only to discover that these writers were surprisingly capable of turning the state into a platform for expressing new visions of global belonging. Arab American literature in their hands became a new way of highlighting connections among different dispossessed Americans and among foreign communities. Rather than propagate US policy, cultural diplomacy was for Hammad and Abinader a new means of articulating a radically inclusive internationalism.<sup>76</sup> Telling America’s story to the world has never been as univocal an enterprise as the government’s propagandists have hoped.

Harilaos Stecopoulos, 2023. *Telling America's Story to the World: Literature, Internationalism, Cultural Diplomacy*. New York: Oxford University Press. Excerpt used with approval of Oxford University Press.

TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012); Greg Barnhisel, *Cold War Modernists: Art, Literature, and American Cultural Diplomacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); Brian Edwards, *After the American Century: The Ends of U.S. Culture in the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); Kate A. Baldwin, *The Racial Imaginary of the Cold War Kitchen: From Sokol'niki Park to Chicago's South Side* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2016); and Harris Feinsod, *The Poetry of the Americas: From Good Neighbors to Countercultures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

## Introduction

1. Michael Rogin cites the CIA's use of the phrase the "Non-Communist Left" in "When the CIA Was the NEA," *The Nation*, June 12, 2000, 16. Future references to this essay will be included in the body of the text. The question of whether the CIA controlled these magazines and other cultural institutions is complicated. There is little doubt one can identify overt acts of censorship (e.g., *Encounter's* rejection of Dwight McDonald's essay "America! America!" [1958]) in CCF policy. As Frances Stonor Saunders has argued, the CCF's "mission was to nudge the intelligentsia of western Europe away from its lingering fascination with Marxism and Communism towards a view more accommodating of 'the American way.'" See *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: New Press, 2001), 1. Future references to this volume will be included in the body of the text. Rogin seconds Saunders' point by emphasizing the importance of such government documents as NSC-10/2, in which George Kennan, then head of the State Department's policy planning staff, called for anti-communist government operations that couldn't be traced back to the state ("When the CIA," 16). The resulting creation of the Psychological Warfare Workshop proved pivotal to CIA involvement in the cultural sphere. But, as many commentators from Lasch onward have pointed out, it is also likely that many of the contributing writers and intellectuals were ready to police themselves. Jason Epstein puts it well: "The depressing fact is that the cadre of intellectuals who had been arbitrarily placed in high journalistic and other cultural positions by means of United States funds, were never, as a result of this sponsorship, to be quite free. What limited them was nothing so simple as coercion, though coercion at some levels may have been involved, but something more like the inevitable relations between employer and employee in which the wishes of the former become implicit in the acts of the latter." See "The CIA and the Intellectuals," *New York Review of Books*, April 20, 1967, 16. More contemporary scholars have concurred. Giles Scott-Smith argues, "While the CIA certainly provided the money and influenced the organisational direction," the CCF's "ideas were already common among the intellectual community both in the US and Europe." See *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA and Post-War American Hegemony* (London: Routledge, 2002), 84. And Greg Barnhisel makes a related point: "It is possible... that such an imposition was simply unnecessary—that in terms of appealing to European intellectuals, the CIA and *Encounter's* editors were largely of one mind." See *Cold War Modernists: Art, Literature, and American Cultural Diplomacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 157. Future references to Barnhisel's book will be included in the body of the text.

2. John Updike, “One of My Generation,” *The New Yorker*, November 15, 1969, 57. Future references to this story will be included in the body of the text. For an account of Updike’s relationship with Lasch, see Adam Begley, *Updike* (New York: Harper, 2014), 81.
3. Historian Hugh Wilford agrees with Updike: “It is in the realm of literature that the link between modernism and the CIA appears clearest.” See *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 116. Future references to this book will be included in the body of the text.
4. In this study, I understand cultural diplomacy as linked, if not always equivalent, to propaganda. As Edward Gullion, inventor of the term “public diplomacy,” explained in 1965, he would like to have called the work of the USIA and similar organizations “propaganda.” “It seemed like the nearest thing in the pure interpretation of the word to what we were doing,” writes Gullion. “But ‘propaganda’ has always had a pejorative connotation in this country. To describe the whole range of communications, information, and propaganda, we hit upon ‘public diplomacy.’” Quoted in Robert F. Delaney and John S. Gibson, eds., *American Public Diplomacy: The Perspective of Fifty Years* (Medford, MA: Lincoln Filene Center for Citizenship, 1967), 31. I believe the same logic applies to the term “cultural diplomacy.” This is hardly to dismiss the idea that literary and cultural exchange can reflect internationalist ideals. As Michael Cummings has argued, cultural diplomacy sometimes constitutes “the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding.” See *Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: A Survey* (Washington, DC: Center for Arts and Culture, 2003), 1. As we shall see, liberal internationalism has often informed US cultural diplomacy, and writers have been sensitive to this connection. For the most part, however, I maintain that cultural diplomacy occurs when, to borrow from Brian Edwards, “the state tries to get overly involved with pushing the cultural products—trying to harness the ‘soft power’ of American culture—for geopolitical ends.” See “Interview with Brian T. Edwards,” December 1, 2015, Columbia University Press Blog, <https://www.cupblog.org/2015/12/01/interview-with-brian-t-edwards-author-of-after-the-american-century/> (accessed October 11, 2020). For other important works that engage with the meaning of cultural diplomacy, see Ien Ang et al., “Cultural Diplomacy: Beyond the National Interest?,” *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 21.4 (June 2015): 365–81; Richard T. Arndt, *The First Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005); Nicholas Cull, *The Cold War and the US Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945–1989* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Michael Krenn, *The History of United States Cultural Diplomacy: 1770 to the Present Day* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017); Anne Marie Logue, “Telling America’s Story to the World”: U.S. Public Diplomacy, *American Studies, and Cultural Productions of State*. Master’s Thesis, Duke University, 2009; and Nancy Snow, *Propaganda, Inc.: Selling America’s Culture to the World* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1998).
5. To argue for the domestic literary and political effects of cultural diplomacy is to emphasize the failure of the 1948 US Information and Educational Exchange Act (the Smith-Mundt Act), which prohibited the domestic dissemination of propaganda

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materials. By responding to their cultural diplomatic experiences, writers and other cultural ambassadors invariably exposed the US public to certain aspects of the state's overseas propaganda campaigns. No doubt aware of the impossibility of controlling discourse in a digital age, the Smith-Mundt Modernization Act of 2012 altered the original legislation to allow for the domestic distribution of information and cultural materials produced by the State Department.

6. I borrow the term “cold war modernism” from Barnhisel, *Cold War Modernists*, 3.
7. OED, s.v. “propagation.”
8. See Russ Castronovo, *Propaganda 1776: Secrets, Leaks, and Revolutionary Communications in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 10. The original ecclesiastical definition of propaganda emphasized its relationship to communication and dissemination: “an organization, scheme, or movement for the propagation of a particular doctrine, practice, etc.” OED, s.v. “propaganda.”
9. Theodor Adorno, “Culture and Administration,” in *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. J. M. Bernstein (London: Routledge, 1991), 107.  
 I also have learned a great deal about literature, administration, and institutional structure from the following works of literary sociology: Sarah Brouillette, *UNESCO and the Fate of the Literary* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019); James F. English, *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Loren Glass, *Counterculture Colophon: Grove Press, the Evergreen Review, and the Incorporation of the Avant-Garde* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013); Evan Kindley, *Poet-Critics and the Administration of Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017); and Mark McGurl, *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).
10. Bruce Robbins, *Feeling Global: Internationalism in Distress* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 52.
11. For a telling and influential example, consider how Fredric Jameson responded dismissively to Tony Bennett's essay “Putting the Policy in Cultural Studies,” by claiming that the idea of left intellectuals “talking to and working with what used to be called the ISAs” was both “obscene” and “sinister.” For Bennett's piece, see *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), 23–37. For Jameson's riposte, see “On ‘Cultural Studies,’” *Social Text* 34 (1993): 29. More recently, Lawrence Rothfield has offered an important overview of the place of cultural policy studies in the humanities. See “Cultural Policy Studies?! Cultural Policy Studies?!? Cultural Policy Studies?!? A Guide for Perplexed Humanists,” <https://culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu/sites/culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu/files/Rothfield1.pdf> (accessed October 10, 2018).
12. To put it in Althusserian terms, many scholars of US literature have little difficulty emphasizing the idea of a repressive state apparatus—hence their interest in censorship, prisons, states of exception, and other forms of stricture—but they have far less interest in exploring the ideological state apparatus and its complex and uneven relationship to cultural production. For an important recent examination of Althusser, see Caren Irr, “An Althusser for the Twenty-First Century [introduction to guest edited special issue],” *Mediations* 30.2 (2017): 29–36. Many Americanists

- employ Foucault's work on governmentality to make similar points about containment and control. For an example of an insightful book that attends to US state cultural production of a literary critical variety, see William J. Maxwell, *F. B. Eyes: How J. Edgar Hoover's Ghostreaders Framed African American Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015). For an invaluable study of these issues in the Western context, see David Lloyd and Norman Thomas, *Culture and the State* (London: Routledge, 1998).
13. See, for example, Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*; David Cate, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy During the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); and Andrew Rubin, *Archives of Authority: Empire, Culture, and the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).
  14. See, for example, Rebekah Kowal, *Dancing the World Smaller: Staging Globalism in Mid-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019); Alan L. Heil Jr., *Voice of America: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); and Hiromi Ochi, "Democratic Bookshelf: American Libraries in Occupied Japan," in *Pressing the Fight: Print, Propaganda, and the Cold War*, ed. Greg Barnhisel and Catherine Turner (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 89–111.
  15. As Danielle Fosler-Lussier has argued about US musical diplomacy and the nation's reputation overseas, it's "difficult to measure any changes in attitude or increases in prestige due specifically to musical performances." See *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy* (Berkeley: University of California, 2015), 19.
  16. For an illuminating reading of Moore's poem "Combat Cultural" (1959), see Catherine Gunther Kodat, *Don't Act, Just Dance: The Metapolitics of Cold War Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 1–8.
  17. See Barnhisel, *Cold War Modernists*; Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945–1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Lawrence Schwartz, *Creating Faulkner's Reputation: The Politics of Modern Literary Criticism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990). Some cultural cold warriors also worried that modernism might prove incapable of combating US consumer decadence. As Barnhisel notes, many of *Encounter's* writers expressed concern over the excesses of the affluent society (165).
  18. Meyer was the president of the United World Federalists in 1947, and thus, like his fellow federalist Norman Cousins, an ardent proponent of internationalism. His association with this organization would lead in 1953 to FBI claims that he was a secret communist.
  19. As Hugh Wilford has recently reminded us, the study of cold war modernism prompted a debate between such scholars as Frances Stonor Saunders, who believe that the CIA and its cultural fronts tended to identify modernism as an inherently anti-communist aesthetic, and such academics as David Cate, who maintain that this argument is overstated and minimizes the agency's more instrumentalist attitude toward aesthetics, modernist or otherwise. See Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 115.
  20. On the proposed aerial "delivery" of Eliot's poem, see Richard M. Elman, *Namedropping: Mostly Literary Memoirs* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 192.
  21. Allen Ginsberg makes this point in a more polemical vein in his prose poem "T. S. Eliot Entered My Dreams" (1975), when his speaker asks the Nobel Prize winner to explain



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the relationship between the cold war state and American literature by addressing Angleton's role in coopting high modernism for anti-communism. "What did you think of the domination of poetics by the C.I.A.?" queries the speaker of Eliot. "After all, wasn't Angleton your friend?" For Ginsberg, figures like Angleton threatened to become the de facto gatekeepers of modern poetry, controlling the meaning and dissemination of modernism within and without the nation. See "T. S. Eliot Entered My Dreams," in *Poems All over the Place, Mainly Seventies* (Cherry Valley, NY: Cherry Valley Editions, 1978), 46.

22. *Perspectives USA* was also published in "French (*Profils*), Italian (*Prospetti*), and German (*Perspektiven*)." See Barnhisel, *Cold War Modernists*, 193.
23. Lionel Trilling, "Editor's Commentary," *Perspectives USA* 2 (Winter 1953): 5.
24. Barnhisel, *Cold War Modernists*, 180.
25. Christopher Lasch, "The Cultural Cold War: A Short History of the Congress of Cultural Freedom," 94.
26. "The CIA and the Intellectuals," Jason Epstein's account of postwar intellectuals unquestioningly accepting CIA largesse (first-class tickets, lavish dinners, large honoraria), is from this perspective less a historical curio than a cautionary tale. More cynically, one might claim that the study of the cultural cold war offers scholars a strange sort of professional validation at a time when they feel ever more devalued by the government and society at large. In revealing how their predecessors built the discipline through unsavory relationships with the power elite, scholars may express their envious fascination with a period when intellectuals received their due.
27. Of course, as Elaine Tyler May has rightly emphasized, "the field was not born during the cold war era. It emerged in the 1930s," with Yale offering the first course in 1931 and Harvard creating the first degree-granting program in 1936. Yet if American Studies had New Deal and, to a lesser extent, Popular Front origins, this hardly discouraged cold war ideologues from identifying in the new field a valuable asset with which to influence foreign communities, particularly academics and students. See "The Radical Roots of American Studies," *American Quarterly* 48.2 (1996): 180.
28. Richard Horowitz, "The Politics of International American Studies," *American Studies International* 31.1 (April 1993): 97.
29. See Timothy Melley, *The Covert Sphere: Secrecy, Fiction, and the National Security State* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012); Alan Nadel, *Containment Culture: American Narratives, Postmodernism, and the Atomic Age* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995); Donald E. Pease, "Moby Dick and the Cold War," in *The American Renaissance Reconsidered*, ed. Walter Michaels and Donald Pease (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 113–55; John Carlos Rowe, "Areas of Concern: Area Studies and the New American Studies," in *The Cultural Politics of the New American Studies* (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press, 2012), 84–104; and John Carlos Rowe, "US Cultural Attaches and the Cultural Cold War," in *Neocolonial Fictions of the Global Cold War*, ed. Steven Belletto and Joseph Keith (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2019), 171–86. Even as I adopt a new and hopefully productive perspective on literature, culture, and the cold war, I cannot overstate the debt which all Americanists owe this group of intellectuals. They have taught us the invaluable lesson of reading humanities scholarship with the same suspicion we usually

- direct toward so-called primary texts. Let me add that Rowe's examination of American Studies scholars and cultural attaches Carl Bode and Sarell Everett Gleason has been particularly important to this project. Rowe's claim in the piece that "for the truly 'tenured radical' or scholar activist, full disclosure of one's political agenda, indeed, one's *patriotic* purposes, must be the moral law" informs my work throughout this book (186).
30. To quote Patrick Iber, "The Cultural Cold War was also a bottom-up phenomenon, not one directed solely from above." See *Neither Peace nor Freedom: The Cultural Cold War in Latin America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 7.
  31. Gordon Hutner, *What America Read: Taste, Class, and the Novel, 1920–1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 189.
  32. As the remainder of this volume should suggest, I don't so much discount as complicate the claims of recent studies that adopt a more skeptical attitude toward the consequences of state involvement in the literary arts. For two important examples of such work, see Eric Bennett, *Workshops of Empire: Stegner, Engle, and American Creative Writing During the Cold War* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2015); and Juliana Spahr, *Du Bois's Telegram: Literary Resistance and State Containment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).
  33. See J. Manuel Espinosa, *Inter-American Beginnings of U.S. Cultural Diplomacy, 1936–1948* (Washington, DC: US Department of State, 1976); Claire F. Fox, *Making Art Panamerican: Cultural Policy and the Cold War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); Deborah Cohn, *The Latin American Literary Boom and U.S. Nationalism During the Cold War* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012); and Harris Feinsod, *The Poetry of the Americas: From Good Neighbors to Countercultures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).
  34. See Brian Edwards, *After the American Century: The Ends of U.S. Culture in the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); and Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).
  35. According to one CIA official, literature potentially changed a foreign "reader's attitude and action to an extent unmatched by the impact of any other single medium." Quoted in Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 245.
  36. That Truman carried a copy of Tennyson's poem in his wallet provides a powerful illustration of national internationalism. See David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 298.
  37. As Bentham put it, "The word international, it must be acknowledged, is a new one . . . . It is calculated to express, in a more significant way, the branch of law which goes under the name of the law of nations." Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, ed. J. H. Burns and H. L. A. Hart (London: Athlone Press, 1970), 296. For an interesting examination of the philosopher's vision of international jurisprudence, see M. W. Janis, "Jeremy Bentham and the Fashioning of 'International Law,'" *American Journal of International Law* 78.2 (April 1984): 405–18.
  38. Akira Iriye, "Internationalism," in *The Global History Reader*, ed. Bruce Mazlish and Akira Iriye (New York: Routledge, 2004), 202.

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39. See Akira Iriye, *From Nationalism to Internationalism: US Foreign Policy to 1914* (London: Routledge, 1977); and Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890–1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).
40. John Winthrop, “A Modell of Christian Charity,” Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Hanover Historical Texts Collection, <https://history.hanover.edu/texts/winthmod.html> (accessed July 7, 2021).
41. See Cengiz Sisman, “Christian Missionary Schools in the Ottoman Empire,” *The Encyclopedia of Jews in Islamic World*, ed. Norman Stillman (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2010), 610.
42. Wilson, the enthusiastic proponent of the League of Nations, approved the US invasion of, among other nations, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Nicaragua during his tenure as president.
43. Michael Bentley, “Book Review,” *Victorian Studies* 43.4 (2001): 619.
44. John Dewey, “America in the World,” *The Nation* 56.14 (March 1918): 287. Future references to this essay will be included in the body of the text.
45. Lauren Berlant, “Citizenship,” in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, ed. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler (New York: NYU Press, 2007), 37–38.
46. See “Beyond Liberal Internationalism,” *Dissent* (Winter 2017), <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/left-foreign-policy-beyond-liberal-internationalism> (accessed August 21, 2021).
47. See Charles T. Call et al., “Is the UN a Friend or Foe?” Brookings, October 3, 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/10/03/is-the-un-a-friend-or-foe/> (accessed November 7, 2021).
48. Patricia Clavin and Glenda Sluga, “Rethinking the History of Internationalism,” in *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History*, ed. Patricia Clavin and Glenda Sluga (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 8. Future references to this chapter will be cited in the text.
49. Richard Falk, “The Making of Global Citizenship,” in *Global Visions: Beyond the New World Order*, ed. Jeremy Brecher et al. (Boston: South End Press, 1993), 41. In *Through Other Continents*, Wai Chee Dimock cites recent work on global civil society to ask, “What would world governance look like . . . if civil society were given a voice?” She explores this question by locating civil value and global community in reading—and, more broadly, literary culture—across time. Her diachronic project has proven crucial to my work on American literature and internationalism. See *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 8.
50. Peter Singer, *One World Now: The Ethics of Globalization* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 8.
51. For a classic account of “revolutionary internationalism,” see Fred Halliday, “Three Concepts of Internationalism,” *International Affairs* 64.2 (Spring 1988): 194–97. For a recent analysis of “third world internationalism,” see Charisse Burden-Stelly and Gerald Horne, “Third World Internationalism and the Global Color Line,” in *America and the World*, ed. David C. Ingerman et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 370–96. Efforts to challenge US capitalist and imperialist

- power within late twentieth and early twenty-first century transnational American Studies often draw implicitly on these linked political and intellectual traditions. “A transnational American Studies approach can only justify its politicized agenda if it continues to show that the assumptions of an American exceptionalism are untenable,” argue Winifried Fluck, Stefan Brandt, and Ingrid Thaler, and left internationalisms have been crucial to this process. See “Introduction: The Challenges of Transnational American Studies,” in *Transnational American Studies*, ed. Winifried Fluck et al. (Tubingen: Narr, 2007), 7. For an indispensable analysis of this issue, see Jane Desmond and Virginia Dominguez, “Resituating American Studies in a Critical Internationalism,” *American Quarterly* 48.3 (September 1996): 475–90.
52. Yohann Koshy, “What Does Internationalism Actually Mean?” *New Internationalist* 4/3/19, <https://newint.org/immersive/2019/04/03/what-does-internationalism-actually-mean>.
  53. For some excellent examples of Americanist scholarship that engages with both left internationalist traditions, see Kate Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters Between Black and Red, 1922–1963* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Bill Mullen, *Afro Orientalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); and Cheryl Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism: Women Writers of the Black Left, 1945–1995* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013).
  54. To put it in more contemporary economic terms, liberal internationalism shouldn’t be understood as always supportive of neoliberal globalization. While the growth of unfettered global capitalism has benefited from a rhetoric of world connection and unity associated with this tradition, liberal internationalism has also enabled the expression of environmentalist resistance that challenges corporate profits. To take one salient example, the UN generated one of the first important statements on sustainability, the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (1972).
  55. See Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 67.
  56. William L. Patterson, ed., *We Charge Genocide: The Historic Petition to the United Nations for Relief from a Crime of the United States Government Against the Negro People* (New York: Civil Rights Congress, 1951).
  57. Eleanor Roosevelt publicly “characterized the petition as ‘ridiculous in terms of the UN definition’ of genocide”—a politically motivated gesture that indirectly attests to the US government’s concern over being shamed at the UN. See Charles H. Martin, “Internationalizing ‘The American Dilemma’: The Civil Rights Congress and the 1951 Genocide Petition to the United Nations,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16.4 (Summer 1997): 49.
  58. Joseph S. Nye Jr. coined the term “soft power” in the late 1980s. See Nye, “Soft Power,” *Foreign Policy* 80 (Autumn 1990): 153–71.
  59. Ben Cherrington, “The Division of Cultural Relations,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 3.1 (January 1939): 137.
  60. For a commentary on Puerto Rico’s new importance in the early 1940s, see Earl K. Senff, “Puerto Rico: ‘Good Neighbor’ Barometer,” *World Affairs* 104.4 (December 1941): 234–38.

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61. Liam Kennedy and Scott Lucas, “Enduring Freedom: Public Diplomacy and U.S. Foreign Policy,” *American Quarterly* 57.2 (June 2005): 310.
62. The relationship between internationalism and cosmopolitanism is complex. While liberal internationalism is, as we have seen, often associated with powerful political and economic interests, it can also co-exist with—and sometimes enable—the expression of more subversive political expression. In Timothy Brennan’s view, “internationalism seeks to establish global relations of respect and cooperation, based on acceptance of differences in polity as well as culture.” See “Cosmopolitanism and Internationalism,” *New Left Review* 7 (January/February 2001), <https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii7/articles/timothy-brennan-cosmopolitanism-and-internationalism> (accessed September 21, 2020). Cosmopolitanism originates in the classical period and is sometimes understood as referring to being a citizen of the world. As Martha Nussbaum puts it, “the cosmopolitan” is “the person whose primary allegiance is to the community of human beings in the entire world.” See “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism,” *Boston Review*, October 1, 1994, <http://bostonreview.net/martha-nussbaum-patriotism-and-cosmopolitanism> (accessed December 21, 2020). This definition of cosmopolitanism recalls the more utopian vision of internationalism described above. Yet many other scholars define cosmopolitanism in far less generous terms. Brennan understands cosmopolitanism as springing “from a comfortable culture of middle-class travelers, intellectuals and businessmen” thus linking it to some of the same constituencies who would likely support the capitalist aspects of liberal internationalism. Bruce Robbins claims that some intellectuals view cosmopolitanism even more harshly: “Understood as a fundamental devotion to the interests of humanity as a whole, cosmopolitanism has often seemed to claim universality by virtue of its independence, its detachment from the bonds, commitments, and affiliations that constrain ordinary nation-bound lives. It has seemed to be a luxuriously free-floating view from above.” See *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 1. In this description, the privileged few invoke the universalism of cosmopolitanism to behave in a selfish and disconnected manner reminiscent of the worst excesses of global capital. Cheah, Robbins, and the contributors to their collection trouble this negative assessment of cosmopolitanism, urging various versions of critical cosmopolitanism, but for many scholars the elite association of the term remains palpable.
63. Irving Kristol and Stephen Spender, “After the Apocalypse,” *Encounter* 1 (October 1953): 1.
64. We might note that *Encounter* published James Baldwin and Leslie Fiedler, two writers who, for all their willingness to promote anti-communism during the early to mid-1950s, also used their work to challenge certain American shibboleths. *Transition*, the Kampala-based magazine, was arguably the most counterhegemonic of all the CCF’s periodicals.
65. See Brian Roberts, *Artistic Ambassadors: Literary and International Representation of the New Negro Era* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013); and Brook Thomas, “Reconstruction and World War I: The Birth of What Sort of Nation(s)?,” *American Literary History* 30.3 (Fall 2018): 559–83.
66. For an insightful examination of how American writers understood both modernization and internationalism, see Guy Reynolds, *Apostles of Modernity: American Writers*

Harilaos Stecopoulos, 2023. *Telling America's Story to the World: Literature, Internationalism, Cultural Diplomacy*. New York: Oxford University Press. Excerpt used with approval of Oxford University Press.

- in the Age of Development* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008). Like Reynolds, I am interested in identifying and analyzing “an unmapped internationalist genealogy within postwar American writing” (5).
67. Paule Marshall chronicles this experience in *Triangular Road: A Memoir* (New York: Civitas Books, 2009), 1.
  68. John Updike, “Bech in Rumania,” *The New Yorker*, October 8, 1966, 54.
  69. Leslie Fiedler, “Looking Backward: America from Europe,” *Partisan Review* (1952): 124.
  70. Winifried Fluck made this point with reference to Toni Morrison’s 1993 visit to Berlin’s Amerika Haus. Personal communication.
  71. Furious with Eisenhower’s reluctance to protect Black schoolchildren attending Central High, Armstrong stated, “The way they are treating my people in the South, the government can go to hell.” His outburst would help push the administration into sending the military to Arkansas. For a valuable analysis of this confrontation, see Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 63–64.
  72. See *Meditations after the Bear Feast: The Poetic Dialogues of N. Scott Momaday and Yuri Vaella* (Brunswick, ME: Shanti Arts, 2016). Borrowing from Jahan Ramazani, we might say that these dialogues indicate how the cultural cold war inadvertently helped “modern and contemporary poetry” overflow “national borders, exceeding the scope of national literary paradigms.” See *A Transnational Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), xi.
  73. Reynolds makes a related point when he argues that “writers filled . . . the role of diplomat-traveler, engaging with and interpreting foreign cultures for an American readership” (9).
  74. Norman Cousins, letter to the Second US-China Writers’ Conference, October 16, 1984. Box 964, Norman Cousins Papers, UCLA Special Collections.
  75. Paradoxically enough, this book focuses on internationalism and cultural diplomacy in large part to better understand the relationship between US literature and US state and state-affiliated institutions. I am hardly alone among post-national Americanists in finding myself concerned with domestic terrain and domestic effects. As Caren Irr has insightfully argued, “Scholars particularly concerned with dislodging the imperializing effects of American ideology often find themselves working largely within the national framework that it is the business of that ideology to defend.” See “Where in the World Is US Literature?,” *American Literary History* 30.2 (Summer 2018): 381. While it lies beyond the scope of this project, unquestionably the trials and tribulations of foreign literary diplomats in the United States under the aegis of cultural diplomatic initiatives merit analysis. Foreign writers visiting the United States also wrestled with the troubled relationship between internationalism and institutionalism, and located in their American visits ample reason to comment on the global meaning of the literary.
  76. I don’t have time to explore this dynamic at length, but I would argue that postwar US writers, through their complex and often critical relationship to state cultural diplomacy, helped prefigure the transnational turn in US literary studies. One can draw important connections between the global interventions of Abinader, Alvarez, Lynn Nottage, and other contemporary literary ambassadors and the scholarly interest in US literature in the world evident in the work of, among others, Baldwin, Cohn, Dimock, Eve Dunbar, Edwards, Shelley Fisher Fishkin, Viet Ngyuen, Richard Purcell, and Rowe.