

ARCHIVES OF AUTHORITY: EMPIRE, CULTURE, AND THE COLD WAR. Andrew N. Rubin. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012. *Translation/Transnation Series*, 184 pp., \$39.50. (clothbound). ISBN 978-0-691-15415-2.

Scholars working to excavate the ugly history of how the United States projected its influence worldwide during the long years of the Cold War have often, and rightly, focused on hard power: weapons, embargoes, counterinsurgency training. But as Andrew Rubin points out in his *Archives of Authority*, the subtler suasions of soft power—in this case, the processes of cultural transmission and replication that strategically inducted a selected group of politically acceptable postwar writers into a carefully composed canon of “world” literature—also require excavation if we are to grasp the full depth and texture of anticommunism as a global project. In conversation with the work of scholars like Frances Stonor Saunders, Penny von Eschen, and Pascale Casanova, Rubin explores how Cold War cultural politics, shaped as it was by a new and U.S. government-sponsored set of dissemination and translation practices, helped to constitute a broader shift in imperial authority away from Great Britain and toward the United States. By revealing what he terms the *archives of authority*, namely, the history of the instrumental promotion of certain authors and ideas over others during this period, Rubin demonstrates that modern literary culture is dotted with the Central Intelligence Agency’s fingerprints.

For such a short book, *Archives of Authority* covers considerable ground, tracking the genealogy of an idea—*Weltliteratur*, literally “world literature”—first conceived by Johann Wolfgang Goethe during the 1820s. Goethe’s notion of *Weltliteratur*, Rubin explains, imagined “a mode of mutual understanding and coexistence between nations,” albeit one yet to be realized, whether in Goethe’s day or in our own—a “not-yet present that pointed to the future” (p. 2). As utopian a vision as a “world literature” was and remains, Rubin argues that its power has proved enduring, whether in the halls of comparative literature classrooms, the bunkers of intelligence officers, or the minds of secular humanists like Erich Auerbach and Edward Said, from whom Rubin derives much inspiration. During the Cold War, the notion of *Weltliteratur* became another weapon in the service of anticommunist containment, an imagined community of writers whose work was

more palatable to the funders of organizations like the Congress for Cultural Freedom and publications like *Encounter* and *der Monat* than that informed by a more radical theory and praxis. This meant, Rubin writes, that the Cold War culture industry published Albert Camus, but not Jean-Paul Sartre; Wole Soyinka, but not Derek Walcott; Raymond Williams, but not E. P. Thompson; Edith Sitwell, but not Doris Lessing. George Orwell, the period's premier metaphorist of totalitarianism, turns out to have been this initiative's beneficiary, the rapid global translation of his works presented here as something of a reward for his willingness to denounce "crypto-communists and fellow-travelers" (p. 25) to the British government. Rubin is less interested, however, in denouncing the authors who found such favor than in reminding us of all the authors who did not, and hence of the silences and omissions written into the ostensibly inclusive framework of a global literary landscape. He does so not to rehash what other authors have, for the most part, already revealed about the cultural Cold War, but rather to make a political argument: that "the forces that continue to actively manipulate the archive of possible knowledge remain an active component in our culture and society" (p. 27), and that we require a historically situated, modernist politics of humanism in order to resist them.

Archives of Authority is a valuable and thought-provoking work. Despite its provocative title, though, the archivists and archival theorists who constitute this journal's primary readership will find that Rubin deploys "archives" more as an occasional metaphor than as a site of sustained analysis. The exception to this is Rubin's fascinating discussion (pp. 11–17) of his attempt to secure CIA documents about the English poet Stephen Spender, first using a Freedom of Information Act request and then, when the request was denied, through an unsuccessful lawsuit, leading the author to conclude that society's "knowledge of itself and its own history is prohibited by little-known emergency decrees on the terrain of national security" (p. 107). Here and elsewhere, however, this reviewer wished for a deeper engagement with the now substantial literature on the relationship of knowledge to power, state secrecy (*arcana imperii*) and classification regimes, and the role of state documents and their management as critical technologies of governance, particularly given the "archival turn" that has taken place in the fields of literary studies, anthropology, and beyond. That said, *Archives of Authority* will be of great interest to literature scholars, postcolonial theorists, and Cold War specialists across the disciplines. Its critique of cultural instrumentality and appeal for a Said-inflected humanism speak to the stakes of intellectual inquiry, reminding us that in exposing the process by which an unjust world is made, we arm ourselves with the tools to build a different one.

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