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PATRICK IBER. *Neither Peace nor Freedom: The Cultural Cold War in Latin America*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2015. 336 pp.

In the nearly thirty years since the collapse of the Soviet Union, scholars have worked to make sense of Latin America's troubled experience during the Cold War, exploring the many tensions that dogged the region's artists and intellectuals in their confrontations with the often suffocating ideological forces at work. In *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City* (HUP 2002), Jean Franco refers to the experience as a "drama of loss and dislocation" (1), while celebrating Latin American literature for its elaborations of utopias as a form of resistance.

With *Neither Peace nor Freedom*, a masterful account of Cold War history as tragedy, Patrick Iber assumes a leading role in this still-emerging field of study. The book sets out to demonstrate the unenviable position of left-wing Latin American writers and artists who, amid pursuits of a humane socialism for their countries and region, found themselves ensnared in a civilizational clash between US capitalist democracy and Soviet communist authoritarianism. Iber's main concern lies in the ways these individuals often unwittingly served competing superpower interests by channeling their intellectual efforts into the activities of Cold War front groups—primarily the CIA-sponsored Congress of Cultural Freedom (CCF) and the Cominform-aligned World Peace Council (WPC)—whose international conferences, signature campaigns and journals served to defend certain values against enemy propaganda. While purportedly eschewing ideology, the CCF professed to promote intellectual freedom against Soviet repression; for its part, the WPC fashioned itself a beacon of social justice and peace against North American imperialism. Yet, as Iber stresses throughout the book, the progressive language deployed by both these groups often hid more sinister interests of the governments they represented and frequently contradicted their covert operations.

Through a series of intriguing storylines reconstructed via extensive archival research, Iber traces how local political and aesthetic tensions became inscribed into the larger Cold War and, conversely, how the binary logic of the global struggle infused these local debates. One such subplot charts Diego Rivera's relationship with the Communist Party and underscores the inevitable discord between

official Soviet aesthetic prescriptions and the trends unique to Latin American art. Emphasizing the frequently unsuspecting nature of intellectuals' inscription into Cold War politics, Iber reveals the Mexican writer Juan Rulfo's financial relationship with the CIA during the 1950s. Yet another historical detail presented in Cold War terms concerns the politically contrived competition in the 1960s for the Nobel Prize in literature between the CCF-boosted Argentine author Jorge Luís Borges and the WPC-championed Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. Borges' inability to secure the prize, partly due to the machinations of others, adds to the book's overall sense of tragedy.

Throughout, Iber demonstrates a talent for highlighting the rich ironies of history while nuancing simplistic characterizations of Cold War actors, including the superpowers, as monolithic and one-dimensional forces. For example, Iber depicts the hope that the Cuban Revolution initially offered to anti-imperialist and anti-totalitarian leftists by presenting itself as a viable path toward a truly Latin American form of emancipation. The emphasis on CCF members' active contributions to Fidel Castro's 1959 triumph underscores the complexity and novelty of the Cuban phenomenon within the binary world order until then. Iber then details how growing Leftist disillusion with Cuban authoritarianism coincided with revelations in 1967 that the CIA had funded the CCF. It is a devastating portrait of the ultimate isolation that the Cold War wrought on the region's intellectuals and artists.

Iber explores this isolation best through his characterization of Emir Rodríguez Monegal, the Uruguayan editor of the short-lived CCF-funded journal of the mid-1960s, *Mundo Nuevo*. Through *Mundo Nuevo*, Monegal was tasked with modernizing Latin American anticommunism, rendered passé by the galvanizing force of the Cuban Revolution and its official organ of cultural production, *Casa de las Américas*. Iber depicts Monegal as a conflicted hero. Surprised and offended by the hypocrisy detailed in the CIA revelations, he nonetheless remained confident in the worthiness of his cause, only to see it derailed when he could no longer justify his stewardship of a journal propped up by an organization infamous in Latin America for its role in US imperial interventionism.

If Iber's characters seem unable to fully rise above the pressures of Cold War politics at the expense of their agency, it has less to do with any philosophical prejudice against human will and more to do

with the author's uncompromising and necessary reliance on historical record. Unlike the previous generation of Latin Americanists working on the cultural Cold War, his research is not compounded by memory's penchant for embellishment, as might be seen in Franco's writing, for example. Such a reliance can lead to bleaker, less romantic and more complete versions of the truth. Take for instance the moment that for Iber "epitomized the Cultural Cold War in Latin America at its height:" Mario Vargas Llosa's speech upon reception of Venezuela's 1967 Rómulo Gallegos Literary Prize during which he claimed that "literature is fire" (211). Whereas Franco invokes the statement as exemplary of the power that Latin American writers exercised in defining their moral authority against imposed ideologies (*Decline and Fall* 6), Iber turns to the Mario Vargas Llosa Papers at Princeton, where evidence paints a murkier and less heroic version of the Peruvian novelist's acceptance of the award. A full-fledged supporter of the Cuban Revolution, Vargas Llosa anguished over whether or not to accept the award, conflicted by the fact that the center-left Venezuelan government conferring the prize was at the same time battling an insurgency backed by Cuba (211). Framing this incident in such a way, Iber highlights Latin American writers' general condition of compromise—even in their definitive moments of glory—necessitated by an ultimate inability to escape Cold War politics. In the end, the negative dichotomy of the book's title proves an apt description for the fraught experience of Latin America's intellectuals in the Cold War.

Unlike Franco and other voices belonging to the generation they analyze, the North American Iber, born in 1981, could not have experienced the Cold War and its Latin American iterations as a politically conscious or committed participant. In *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City*, Franco, for example, recalls listening to Neruda read his poetry at a 1951 gathering of communist trade unionists (76). Iber thus represents the best of a new generation of Cold War historians who do not have personal experience from which to draw, but instead must reconstruct the past entirely from primary and secondary sources. This is precisely what he accomplishes with remarkable coherence and objectivity. And if the passion of personal commitment that marks Franco's writing is necessarily impracticable for Iber, the author's love for his subject, palpable on every page, is never in doubt.

This is not to say that Iber's methodology, in which personal memory is absent, is superior to that of Franco and others who

maintain some personal stake in confronting the Cold War past. But his success in reconstructing history begs of us to contemplate the perpetual change that characterizes the process of historical memory, as one generation of witnesses inevitably passes responsibility to the next. Iber's book gives reason for optimism that, in the hands of the newest generation of historians, the past—especially its tragic Latin American Cold War variation—will remain essential to the present.

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