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The Aesthetics of the CIA

Spies live in a dangerous world; writers who write about spies try to depict that danger. Writers who have been spies, such as John Le Carre, tell us of the dangers they endured and survived. The danger to writing is when spies act like writers, as instruments of governmental policy. In recent years this has happened so very often that a whole new genre of literature has emerged in our world in which High Culture has been made to serve low ends, and even imaginative writers have invented cover stories to perform treasonable acts against the civilized world of letters.

On a recent NBC TV documentary a former CIA Case Officer, who now calls himself Caleb Bach, described how he had posed in Northern California and in Portugal during the Revolution, as an artist. It must have been with similar motives in mind that the Agency employed the writer Peter Matthiessen after he had graduated from Yale during the early years of the Cold War, to dissemble himself in Paris as an apprentice writer. In Matthiessen's case the description proved short-lived, only a matter of some two years during which he helped to found *The Paris Review*, and then he went on to have a distinguished literary career. Nevertheless, when he wrote of that experience, shortly afterwards, in an early novel entitled **Partisans**, Matthiessen disguised his protagonist as a press service journalist. Only two and a half decades after the book was published by Viking Press, after the *New York Times* through Agency sources blew Matthiessen's "cover," could any reader make sense out of such a melodramatic and painful story. Unless you knew that this "journalist" was leaving the Agency, or coming in out of the Cold, the story would have seemed the usual pretentious eyewash of the overly ambitious young novelist whereas it was, evidently, an effort to be loyal to his friends who had recruited him and to certain "idealistic" convictions which his work had somehow put in jeopardy.

We read spy novelists to feel "witting" about a world of secrecy and fear, about contingent beings and loss of innocence, but when we are exposed to literary essays composed by spies, or translations of contemporary literature which the CIA, or other intelligence agencies, has brought about, or novels about seemingly less contentious aspects of the contemporary world from the official spook point of view, we are being trashed by trash. Such contempt was more or less the motivating spirit of the intelligence community until recently. American spies, generally speaking, did not depict their undercover experiences, but championed a lofty modernist aesthetics, and the politics of liberal democracy, human freedom, and humanistic culture. This Agency cultural "dirty trick" involved not only such enterprises as *Encounter Magazine*, Praeger Publishers, the Congress for Cultural Freedom's press services, and foreign magazines, and columnists, and broadcasting media, but international juries awarding literary prizes, respect, prestige, the Culture's best foot forward, not its worst. It was an aim to influence consciousness, here as well as abroad, to "preempt," in Agency lingo, and when it was exposed during the Viet Nam war in *Ramparts* and other publications (and some say by the Agency itself) those who claimed they had been used "unwittingly" were irate. They had been used as "assets" and "agents" by the CIA to "preempt" them from the KGB, or to influence others believed to be KGB-inclined. In Agency parlance the aim was to "control," to filter ideas and opinions through a Central Intelligence capable of coming to

the defense of the besieged Culture of our Ruling Classes. Thus, such intellectuals and artists were regularly subsidized “through conduits” and other “circuitous routes” in order to permit them, whether “naïve” or merely “false naïve,” in the words of one former CIA station chief, “the maximum philosophical and psychological room to maneuver.”

From the “control’s” point of view, this image of a dog being led on a very long leash also implied that the Agency permitted some to remain “unwitting” because it was their calculation that they would be both more cooperative and useful, if permitted to act as if they had been “unwitting.”

Explaining this contempt for the people it seemed to admire, retired CIA official E.J. Applewhite says, “we knew they wanted to have it both ways: To be walking with the devil in the shadows secretly, and to be walking in the sun.”

Another former official of a CIA conduit put it to me: “They [the writers] knew where it [the money] was coming from, and in a general way what was happening all along. If anybody says they didn’t they were just being naïve...or false naïve...”

“They were our friends,” Professor Jack Thompson, a Professor of American Literature at SUNY, Stony Brook pointed out: “We know who was deserving, and who were not. Knew what the best stuff was, and we were trying to avoid the standard democratic crap of seeing that funds went to one Jew, one black, one woman, one Southerner. You know what I mean, we wanted to reach our friends, the people who agreed with us, and were trying to do good things.”

Thompson was a director of the Agency conduit, the Farfield Foundation. His friends have included many Third World writers. Now that Farfield is no more, a foundation called Longview awards prizes to writers who uphold the values of the Western World. This year’s winter will be Czeslaw Milosz, alumni of many Congress for Cultural Freedom enterprises, and activities.

Thompson, and others such as journalist Richard Rovere, maintain that the mutual support of agents as writers and writers as assets came to an abrupt halt over the Viet Nam war, and then Watergate. It was horrifying for some to come to the realization that the same opportunistic anti-communism which had motivated the Agency to corrupt elections in Italy, and France, was operative in the fragmentation bombing of peasants in Viet Nam, the coup in Chile, or an Operation Chaos. But the Agency’s cultural apparatus is like that stopped clock which can still tell the time right twice a day. Agents and former agents still prefer to “stonewall” most of the time when asked about their secret activities. They still believe the friends who recruited them had no more public motive in mind than mere “chumship.” If pressed hard enough, they will contend that “in reality” democracy is the worst enemy of the writer, and that there is still a “present danger” from totalitarian communism. The disclosures they make they give over to the Agency carefully to review an advance, or, if they are feeling especially embarrassed, bitter, or heart-broken, they occasionally tend to use that embarrassment to embarrass others: former colleagues, seemingly righteous acquaintances, and friends.

James Jesus Angleton, for example who not too long ago was forced to retire as chief of all the CIA’s counter-intelligence, has been talking the ear off any reporter he can find in Washington who will tell the story of his career as he wants it told, but when I asked about his cultural activities he preferred to name-drop. Angleton simply wondered aloud if I was his “good friend, “Richard Ellmann.”

Richard Ellmann doesn't write spy stories; he's the biographer of Joyce and Yeats, a Professor at Oxford. As I subsequently discovered, too, he served in the OSS with Angleton during the war, and both he and James Jesus Angleton attended Yale at about the same time, and were connected to Professor Norman Holmes Pearson, the revered humanist, also a CIA *incunabula*.

It was also Richard Ellmann who invited me to a private party in the Evanston home of a Chicago painter in the 60's shortly after the disclosure had been made that *Encounter's* mother was the CIA. The guests were nearly all recognizable David Levine caricatures: Daniel Bell, Hannah Arendt, Stephen Spender, Tony Tanner, Saul Bellow, Pearl Kazin Bell, and a certain Mrs. Polyani, a few others less well known. They had all written for one or another Congress for Cultural Freedom publication. After the spaghetti, all angrily engaged in calling each other naïve for not having known who Big Daddy was, or, if they had, why hadn't such information been passed on to all the rest? "I never trusted Irving," said Professor Arendt, referring to "Spender's former co-editor on *Encounter*, Irving Kristol, and "I always thought he was an agent." She said the same retrospectively for Mel Lasky, too, who had replaced Kristol on *Encounter*. Then Spender broke down and began to cry: he had been misled; he knew nothing, never had. The other guests murmured to each other that Stephen was being "naïve," but some seemed to think he was just being "false naïve," and I believe it was Bellow who regarded him with evident disgust, as if he evidently thought Spender was, possibly, both.

I have written to Richard Ellmann to ask if he regards James Angleton as his "good friend" and never received any reply. When I recently went to the archives of The American Committee For Cultural Freedom at the NYU Library's Tamiment Institute, I was at first, permitted to glance through the entire Farfield Foundation file, and to read all the correspondence between Irving Kristol and Sol Stein, presently the founding head of Stein & Day Publishers, but the files were then taken away from me by a young librarian by order, she said, of Daniel Bell, who is a trustee of the archive.

The Norman Holmes Pearson archive at Yale's Beineke Library is also closed until 1980, as are the archives of the International Committee for Cultural Freedom at the University of Chicago under the protection of former *Encounter* writer, Edward Shills, so it is still, apparently, the case that there are "secrets" these cultural frontiers would rather not have disclosed, in the interests, of course, of Western Liberal democracy. For example, though he now says his work for the Agency "had nothing to do with me or my life or my work," Peter Matthieson has written me that he considers it damaging to his reputation to talk about it. "All my work," he points out now, "fiction and non-fiction, stems from concern for human rights, social justice, the human habitat, the racial minorities, and other problems with which the CIA does not concern itself...."

Whatever the merits of Matthieson's later work, his statement about the CIA's concerns is not at all accurate. It has, of course, been in the forefront of the human rights movement in some countries, if not in others, and has expressed an interest in social justice for some, if not for all. Former Deputy Director Bissell was very much concerned with ecology, as was the Agency wing that employed some five thousand academics, according to the Church Committee reports, for recruitment of "agents in place" and "agents of influence," the so-called office of Policy Controls. Even when a man like James Jesus Angleton was spending a large part of his last 19 years in service opening other people's mail, as director of a CIA "dirty trick" called HTLINGUAL, he could

justify his activity as protecting the human rights and freedoms of many millions, here and abroad. It was during Angleton's years with the Agency that the CIA subsidized the translation and publication of his "good friend" T.S. Eliot's poems in Russian.

When I asked Angleton why the Agency took such an interest in literary people during the Cold War, his reply was: "Why not writers? Are they any different than plumbers?"

The writer Herbert Gold has told numerous acquaintances of being asked to spy for the Agency when he went abroad on a trip to Russia. Gold says he refused.

Another very well known American novelist was with the Agency in Guatemala, and, later, served as a tail on certain radical writers in this Country.

Retired from the Agency to collaborate on books about thought, creativity and the environment with Buckminster Fuller, Ed Applewhite, who attended Yale with James Angleton, now calls his fellow alumni "warped." He also claims to find many Agency activities "a disgrace." Trying to seem frank, open, and aboveboard about his career, without revealing Agency secrets, or jeopardizing former buddies, Applewhite confessed to me he thought "a truly sophisticated President (unlike Carter) would not try to reform the Agency but throw it all out and start another with a new name (presumably to do some of the same things) as this one had been "hopelessly disgraced, and dishonored." Oddly enough, the first sentence of Applewhite's collaboration with Fuller, "Synergetics" (Macmillan) perorates: "Dare to be naïve."

During the Vietnamese war "debriefing" or Fulbright scholars in American Studies in remote areas of Latin America and other parts of the Third World took place all the time. The Agency's case-officers regarded every teaching fellow who had slipped through the Fulbright screening process as, at very least, a reliable "asset;" the same was true for journalists, and writers of imaginative literature. The American Studies Association and the MLA also did screening, and people like Norman Holmes Pearson were on their boards. One former Fulbright, an outspoken opponent of the war, who says he did manage to slip through, has provided us with an excellent description of how he was approached at an American Embassy party by a "State Department type," who, years later, was assassinated in Athens after his cover was blown' and it was revealed he was CIA.

My correspondent, who is presently employed at a large state university, says he had noticed the way others at the party had given the spook a wide berth, but when he did the agent came up to him and engaged him in a discussion of the student movement, and the *Encounter Magazine* affair. When the Fulbright scholar made it clear he regarded CIA-support of *Encounter* as "shitty," he was told *one thing had nothing to do with the other, support did not mean editorial control, or propaganda, or dirty tricks*, and then he was invited amiably to take a nightcap in the spook's apartment. There he was questioned more rigorously about some prominent local acquaintances. The spook seemed very disappointed to learn the scholar had spent a lot of time arguing with the wife of one leftist bigwig about Hollywood movies.

Summing up, the former Fulbright declares: "I recognized from the beginning that my appointment had a foreign policy aspect...he had much more information on me than I had on him."

Norman Holmes Pearson was co-editor with W. H. Auden of the 5 volume, **Poets of the English Language** (Viking Press). His later works include a preface to a volume of

post-war South Korean poets, and to a translation of contemporary Estonian poetry; Philby depicted him in his memoirs, contemptuously, as a “poet.”

Pearson, according to William R. Corson, in **The Armies of Ignorance**, (Dial Press) recruited Angleton to do counter-intelligence. Angleton was, according to Corson, a ready and devout apprentice. His code name within the Agency was “mother,” but his nickname was “No Knock.” He was one of those who did not have to bother knocking when he needed to see Allen Dulles.

Angleton dresses like a T.S. Eliot look-alike. English-tailored, waspy, prissy, he claims to admire Pound and e.e. cummings, too, and **Moby Dick**. He’s a typical rich brat turned old and bitter. Angleton’s family owned the Italian franchise of the National Cash Register Company. They also maintained a residence in the Country of the Renaissance. James and his daddy (whom old-timers called “the Colonel” both joined the parent OSS at the outbreak of World War II. “Right from the start it was a Wall Street operation,” one early OSS operative told me: “The Mellon boys (Paul and his brother-in-law David Bruce), and people like Allen Dulles of Sullivan and Cromwell were recruited by Donovan who had very good Wall Street connections.”

Like many other such Wall Streeters, Angleton’s family owned property in the belligerent nations they wished to see protected. He was, however being not entirely crass; there was a strain of devout Catholicism in the family. Before leaving for his war-time adventures, the young Jim, as he was called, had co-founded the highly regarded literary magazine *Furioso* with his Yale roommate, Reed Whittemore.

“Between the motion and the act,” wrote T.S. Eliot, “falls the shadow.”

Furioso was never openly political, though it was sort of pro-Eliot, and Pound. It was also political about the politics of literature. It engaged in some standard rough-up of Stalinist writers, and it was disdainful of ordinary working people, too, as artists, as the subjects of art, or artistic empathy. It was chiefly a showcase for some new American writers, the people Angleton and Whittemore admired, their friends, such as William Jay Smith, lately of the Longview Prize jury, who prattled on, shortly after the end of World War II, in a longish letter about conditions at Oxford. Nowadays, Smith translates more or less “official” Hungarian poets for the State Department and is on the board of the Columbia University Translation Center with such anti-Communist fanatics as Robert Payne, formerly of British Intelligence, and Time-Lifer Patricia Blake. Angleton was “emeritus” on the *Furioso* masthead long after he had left for war, and was no longer an active participant in its editorial deliberations. After the war he was sent to Italy to corrupt elections, and intellectuals. That was also the period when an increasing number of American intellectuals were seeking careers in the University, and quasi-governmental service. As John Updike was to point out in a story that was meant to be read as fairly close-to-life, the Agency had become “a haven of old English majors.” In the spiritual odyssey of agents lying about what you have done is that **Purgatory** one experiences after **The Inferno** of active service and before one can aspire to the totally justified contempt for human beings that comes when one has finally been lodged in **Paradise**. So, it was after 30 years of active service, Angleton, who was also chief liaison to Israeli intelligence, got canned during Watergate by ex-CIA director, William Colby, for leaks to the press, and then Colby got canned, too, and the only difference between these two men is that they have different styles as liars. Angleton claims to know something about poetry; Colby claims to be an upholder of the Law, and Civilization. Angleton now raises

orchids and money to defend agents caught for doing black bag jobs; Colby is a prominent Catholic lay sponsor, along with Saul Bellow, of “The Committee for the Present Danger.”

Colby is still the master of fictions as ingenious as any devised by Matthieson, or Bellow. When asked to comment on President Carter’s recent executive order, which would make the use of journalistic covers for its overseas operatives somewhat less feasible, Colby told NBC News the Government must now provide agents overseas with other governmental covers, as if this hadn’t been going on all along through the Department of State, AID, USIA, over the last 30 years or more.

The Agency has always had an interest in contemporary fiction. Former Director Allen Dulles called his memoirs, “The Craft of Intelligence,” as Percy Lubbock had earlier called an investigation of the great 19th Century novels, “The Craft of Fiction;” Dulles’ ghost writer was a failed novelist turned agent, Howard Roman.

Men like Cord Meyer Jr. and Mel Lasky also bear the stigmas of being disappointed lovers of literature, and writing. They never made it as real writers so they turned to the spookier aspect of human affairs. Nevertheless, inside dopesters in Washington say they still remain quite influential in supplying letters of reference to those who apply for grants from the National Endowment for Humanities, or the Arts. That, I find, rather perplexing. To what exactly could such men attest aside from the political reliability of various applicants?

Even though the Agency and many of its former personnel have been dishonored, the work goes on, under various other disguises. Many former CIA cultural mavens now work for the cultural arms of the multinational corporations, and their cultural and informational publications, such as the very successful new French weekly, *Le Pointe*. Cord Meyer Jr. writes a syndicated column with Charles Bartlett, and works on his memoirs. Applewhite writes his memoirs, too. The literary agencies are flooded with the writings of former agents. Are some of our literary agents agents? Is a man who made his career out of perpetrating such agency frauds as the **Pendowsky Papers** (Doubleday) likely to write credible non-fiction?

Like dignified professors emeritus, such murderers and liars review prominently in the *Times*, and elsewhere. The “assets” give their impressions in print of countries and people they have recently visited, or they profile prominent visiting leftists politely, as if their contempt for the decisions of the Chilean people had nothing whatsoever to do with their admiration for writers like Neruda and Cortazar as “artists.” The Agency’s admiration is a form of contempt: All of us are imperfect beings, artists as well as agents; it would be uncivilized for those who consider themselves a part of the official culture to be less than polite.

The supercilious tone of the contemporary cultural *fonctionnaire* is what I call *false blasé*, similar to that adapted by the narrator in Renata Adler’s **Speedboat**: “In the matter of jobs, I think I know nine spires. Eight are American. One is foreign. One has dual citizenship. It is hard to know what they do, exactly...we all regard as fraught, and even graceless, allusions to such personal concerns as race, religion, income politics, sexual proclivities, and now: institutional affiliation.”

Agents and artists have little common ground to meet on aside from ambition, and greed. The Agency’s greatest feat of verbal wit, according to the Church Committee, was to daub two thousand walls in Chile with the slogan *su paredon* (your wall), before

Allende came to power, as if to warn the Chileans of what was in store for them in electing communism. When terror significantly failed to materialize the Agency helped launch its own counter-revolutionary terror to overthrow the elected Chilean government and put some 60,000 Chileans up against the wall. (*False blasé* aside, this would seem to be an example of that rhetorical device we call “murderous synecdoche,” in which one piece of a figure of speech is given out as an understated warning about what was, in fact, clearly intended to be a bullying threat).

Agent prose is not always so clever or *blasé*. “None but a prejudiced society, hypnotized for millennia by the doggerel propaganda of self-emasculate transvestites” would disbelieve the legend of Atlantis, according to ex-Agency underling and consultant, Peter Tomkins, writing on behalf of a book by a deceased German V-2 rocket expert who puts forth a big bang theory for the mythic continent’s destruction (**The Secret of Atlantis**, by Otto Muck, Times Books, 1978, with a foreword by Tomkins).

In general, the Agency’s official internal creative writing seems more restrained. Applewhite told me that former Director Richard Helms, a prewar UPI journalist, “had a very high standard for intra- and inter-Agency prose communications.” Agents’ memos would often come back to their desks marked up by Helms for obscurity, inelegance, bad grammar, like Williams College term papers.

I also “elicited” as how Helms and his colleagues on the “clandestine” service were thoroughly conversant with many of the numerous types of verbal ambiguity. For example, one never said the President of the United States when writing up some National Intelligence Estimate but used euphemism, epithets, different types of understatement, such as “a confidential informant well-known to this agency.” CIA argot *surveiled* when it should have been seeing, or looking, huddling under *deep cover* to seek *access* for *covert actions*. In other words it not only customarily lied to perform certain illegal acts, but devised curious tropes to depict what it was about. Thus Colby hailed his Phoenix assassination program in Viet Nam as a “legal system” and Chile was “destabilized.” But, along with our State Department, the Agency was also interested in teaching I.A. Richards’ unambiguous Basic English to what we would now call the Third World, as a control mechanism; for just as consciousness affects language, language affects consciousness; and the Agency envisaged much of the underdeveloped world remaining in a passive servile state with “agents of influence” in place “and in need of only a limited number of English words of commercial usage for communication.”

Even when it illicitly “surveiled” the letters of American authors and journalists at home, the Agency declared it was, like some literary anthologists, only engaging in “selected openings.” Updike had his fictional CIA agent dismiss the Vietnam War as “thoroughly minor,” just as one might say of the Elizabethan Chidiok Tichbourne, or the Caroline poets.

E.J. Applewhite told me he believed the very best education an agent could have would be a Ph.D. in English because “you have to deal with a lot of complicated and ambiguous situations” just like explicating certain metaphysical poems. Other agents recommended seminars in translation, and comparative linguistics.

Some Agency dirty tricks were, of course, actually likened to poems, feats of textual analysis, or prosodic enterprises. Well-wrought stratagems were always more highly prized if they seemed to flow *sui generis* from ontology, the political realities of a situation, as in Hungary, initially, or with the Kurds, rather than being imposed on it, as

in the Dominican Republic. The successful counter-espionage coup must seem organic to the situation, like Diem, or the indigenous tribesmen of Indochina, or, later, some Buddhists. Between the conception and the creation of so-called political realities there often was cast a shadow of ineptitude, or bungling, and whole peoples were abandoned to their fates, like the Kurds.

To bolster such operations, and provide propaganda to offset such lamentable losses, a worldwide propaganda network was established by Deputy Director Frank Wissner which he liked to refer to as “Wissner’s Wurlitzer.” This operation utilized “agents in place” in the legitimate media, and so-called Agency *proprietaries*, such as the various English-language papers it funded in the world capitals abroad; and also the Forum International Service which was edited, for a while, by a former literary editor of the *Jerusalem Post*, the poet Murray Mindlin. I was once commissioned to write up the Goldwater-Johnson election results for Forum, a mat service for other Agency proprietaries, as I later learned, and only began to feel that something was odd about the operation when tear sheets of my piece were sent to me from such Agency proprietaries as the *Manila Times* and *Saigon Times* with all critical references to the Viet Nam War stricken out. Some other writers of imaginative literature who performed journalism for *Forum* at one time or another were Robert Conquest, Keith Botsford, Dan Jacobson, and, of course, numerous Third World writers and poets.

It’s impressive how often the same names appear in different literary contexts, and when one investigates the new context one discovers Agency influence. Thus, *Encounter* writers also tended to appear in the *Partisan Review*, another Farfield grantee, and on the literary pages of the *New Leader*, while those of the *Paris Review* syndrome were apt to appear in *Harper’s* (a Cowles publication, as Gardner Cowles was on the board of Farfield) and publications that received grants from the Kaplan Foundation, another CIA conduit, since Mary Kaplan was associated with the founding of the *Paris Review*.

The intermediaries for these transactions were often writers themselves, acting as “friends,” and they tended to be the sort of writers who were more agile at making deals than they were with their own prose. An intriguing portrait of one such cultural *savant* and *maven* appears in Saul Bellow’s novel, **Humboldt’s Gift**, a *roman a clef*.

Pierre Thaxter is protagonist Charles Citrine’s fan and friend, the co-editor of their forthcoming magazine, *The Ark*; a high society playboy and *luftmensch*, he defrauds Citrine of a lot of money and has him continually guessing about who he really is. “To this day,” Citrine confesses to us at one point, “I have never been able to decide whether he had ever been a secret agent.”

The reason why Citrine can’t decide is because, like many Bellow characters, he is just too neurotic. As dramatized through the novel this is a disingenuous explanation, at best, since such a determination would be crucial to a man of Citrine’s interests. (He’s a cultural historian who has grown apart from his former radical chums). Cynically, Thaxter explains everything and nothing about how to manipulate “assets” like Citrine (from the realist’s point of view) to Charles’ girlfriend, Renata: “People of powerful intellect never are quite sure whether or not it’s all a dream.”

Humboldt’s Gift is intended as medic; like much of Bellow’s writing, it deals in pathos, and purports to being zany. Its powerful intellectualizations are not all that mysterious. As Eliot rewrites Dante, so Bellow rewrites Eliot: The freethinking intellectual is dangerous, and neurotic, because he does not know what he wants.

We know that **Humboldt** was modeled after the late Delmore Schwartz (a fan of the early alienated Eliot), and Bellow is as usual his own main character, Citrine, much less alienated, as Eliot purported to be around the time of **The Four Quartets, The Cocktail Party & The Confidential Clerk**. Could Thaxter, perhaps, have his own real-life prototype?

Like a lot of novelists, Bellow makes fiction by reversing some aspects of real life. Although Citrine's magazine *The Ark* never got off the ground, Bellow actually did edit a literary magazine around 1959 called *The Noble Savage* with ex-Yalee Keith Botsford and Jack Ludwig. (See Botsford's piece in one of the early issues entitled, "Confessions of a Russophile"). *The Noble Savage* did publish some writers with CIA backgrounds. Botsford *did* go on to direct a short-lived "translation center" at the University of Texas, Austin, that may have received support through CIA conduits.

When some of its gnomic and mysterious political pontificating is dispelled, the novel's true political message can be seen: don't get involved. All efforts at human cooperation are equally impossible. Intellectuals need to be controlled for their own good and to avoid disaster.

Thus, Citrine confronts Huggins (Dwight MacDonald?) at a gallery opening. Huggins has specifically accused Thaxter of being CIA. Disingenuously, Citrine demands to know why Huggins cites Citrine's political views. Citrine says he is apolitical: "the most political views are like old newspapers...."

Later we will also learn Citrine has replaced the radical politics he never really had with a dedication to the prospectus of Thaxter and *The Ark*, which is depicted in the novel as an attempt to restore "personal" vision to the "free world...."

"...The end of the individual," Citrine philosophizes at Renata, "whom everybody seems to scorn and detest, will make our destruction, our super bombs, superfluous."

Keith Botsford is now a journalist for establishment publications in England; occasionally, too, he contributes reviews to the *New York Times*. Jack Ludwig is a Professor of American Literature at SUNY, Stony Brook. During the Sixties this new State University became a major center of CIA-related activities. A large number of its humanistic faculty had been recruited from Michigan State University, which was a major learning and research center for the CIA. Third World writers were placed by Agency "assets" on the faculty. Aside from Thompson and Ludwig, another leading member of the literature faculty was Alfred Kazin., to whom Edmund Wilson wrote, with some annoyance, in 1961: "Have you seen the special number of the *Nation* devoted to the CIA? I don't see how you still manage to believe in American ideals and all that?"

Of course, the Agency was, at the time, internationalist, like the great multi-national corporations, encompassing diverse groups, such as the United World Federalists, which Cord Meyer Jr. had early penetrated, and The Overseas News Agency, which was of interest to the CIA as early as 1945. Ed Applewhite told me he was once given the project by a superior officer of finding some writer who could "do for Capitalism what Karl Marx had done for Communism."

Applewhite says he demurred, finding the task beyond his capabilities. But a State Department memo from Ellis O. Briggs in the Forties recommends that American publishers be subsidized under the table to print and distribute Arthur Koestler's writings in large Latin American editions to counter the Soviet's cultural offensive in Latin America. Stressing the essential need for secrecy, the memo writer concludes on a

characteristic note of contempt for all those who might regard such a program as a “dirty trick”: “If our Soviet friends come around to make complaints...I think we should be as bland as a headwaiter inspecting a crepe suzette.”

In the Sixties such programs were, of course, carried out by our State Department, by the Alliance For Progress, AID, and other agencies, such as the Voice of America, but always with some measure of contemptuous secrecy, as if all these agencies were aware they were peddling some pretty shoddy goods, as even friendly critics of such programs like Alfred A. Knopf pointed out to Presidential Counselor, Arthur Schlesinger, formerly of the OSS, in a letter.

Secrecy and contempt were, in fact, the CIA’s literary aesthetic, then and now. The secret subsidies by Michael Josselson of the Committee for Cultural Freedom to writers and literary magazines and the secret “destabilization” of Chile were not different acts of a largely heterogeneous organization, but similar as to “preempted” writers from making up their own minds, just as one sought to prevent whole peoples from doing the same thing. If the authenticity of a given situation is at issue it, too, can be manipulated.

Thus, as early as the first Free election in Chile, Fulbright’s and other cultural agents, assets, and millions of dollars, were poured in to support the Christian Democrats, by the large oligarchic families, such as the Edwards family, owners of *El Mercurio*, among other things, and *Panafia*; and from Tierra Del Fuego to the Bolivian border that nation-state came under intense CIA cultural penetration for at least a decade before Allende was elected, and overthrown.

Similarly, those literary prizes which are regularly awarded by international juries of “assets” and “agents” for agency—sanctioned critics to further hype so that large reputations are established overnight, the works taught in universities, and even in lower schools, were not simply efforts made to preempt writers from turning to the KGB; they were also efforts to influence domestic consciousness. It occasionally has happened in the case of “dissident” writers that more-or-less amicable KGB-cleared people have appeared on such juries, for it is neither in the interests of the US or the Soviet Union, at the present time, to promote “destabilization” within their various bloc nation-states.

And if such major literary works were not always saleable as art, entertainment, or edification, they could be pushed as lessons in realism. Necessarily, such works of imaginative literature rarely managed to leap beyond topicality, as readers will discover if they endeavor to read the profoundly boring Prix Fomenter winter, Uwe Johnson, for example.

Caleb Bach explained to Edwin Newman how recruitment of “contact agents,” “agents of influence,” and “agents in place” is pitched: “what this involves then is using any means, any kind of deception, any kind of manipulation, whatever it takes, to convince a man to betray his political cause, his nation, *whatever he really believes in*...there is a basic irony in this whole business because when a target agrees to collaborate with you, suddenly your respect for him as a human being declines immediately. I mean the man has sold out, he is indeed a traitor, he has been had...”

In the case of writers who have been “had” many still maintain that it was done to the unwittingly. If their “unwittingness” was the strategy by which they agreed to be “had,” the only question remains is how widespread the practice of selling out writers and editors really was.

Some of it was done in the name of “friendship,” as when Harper and Row agreed to allow a personal friend, Cord Meyer, Jr., read the manuscript of Alfred McCoy’s, “The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia,” in advance of publication.

In the case of many Jewish writers, an appeal was made to their Zionist sympathies because the Agency, being dependent on Israel’s Mossad for its penetrating of some Iron Curtain nations, was a particular friend of that tiny beleaguered state throughout the incumbency of James Jesus Angleton.

There was also an appeal to venality. Bach described the “classic profile” of one of his targets: “He felt that he was above the law, he was contemptuous of his colleagues....”

But, very often, those involved in such behavior, have also learned to be extremely self-righteous. So Peter Matthieson replied to my inquiry about his past employment by standing on his rights as a gentleman: “There is more at stake than my own vanity, and I’d be grateful if you would take my word for this....”

This is pretty much the same thing as James Jesus Angleton’s involvement with other people’s mail, and modernist literature.

Those who have the Agency point-of-view are very concerned with trust, privacy, and secrecy, for themselves, if not others. They tend to be cut-off, bitter, brokenhearted, and distrustful, in Bach’s words they are “promoted for their practice of trickery and deceit and treachery. Those qualities are basic to the business.”

When writers were flattered into thinking that their grudge against human life could be the occasion for genuine literary enterprises, and some rewarded, as I described earlier, the only appropriate literary expression might have been the *false blasé*, or camp, or silence, of one wished to be at all honest.

“They had everything they wanted on their side,” wrote Pablo Neruda, in his last days, of the Right-wing collaborators with our CIA in Chile: “They had harlequins and jumping jacks, lots of clowns, terrorists with pistols and chains, phony monks, and degraded members of the armed services. They all rode the merry-go-round of petty spite.”

*This work—quoted in, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* by Frances Stonor Saunders (New Press, 1999) – was written in the late 1970’s; copyright to the unpublished manuscript is held by the author’s widow Alice Goode-Elman.