Cambridge Elements

Elements in Publishing and Book Culture
edited by
Samantha Rayner
University College London

AFRICAN LITERATURE
AND THE CIA

Networks of Authorship and Publishing

Caroline Davis
Oxford Brookes University
African Literature and the CIA
Networks of Authorship and Publishing

Elements in Publishing and Book Culture

DOI: 10.1017/9781108663229
First published online: December 2020

Caroline Davis
Oxford Brookes University

Author for correspondence: Caroline Davis, cdavis@brookes.ac.uk

ABSTRACT: During the period of decolonisation in Africa, the CIA covertly subsidised a number of African authors, editors and publishers as part of its anti-communist propaganda strategy. Managed by two front organisations, the Congress of Cultural Freedom and the Farfield Foundation, its Africa programme stretched across the continent. This Element unravels the hidden networks and associations underpinning African literary publishing in the 1960s; it evaluates the success of the CIA in secretly infiltrating and influencing African literary magazines and publishing firms, and examines the extent to which new circuits of cultural and literary power emerged. Based on new archival evidence relating to the Transcription Centre, The Classic and The New African, it includes case studies of Wole Soyinka, Nat Nakasa and Bessie Head, which assess how the authors’ careers were affected by these transnational networks and also reveal how they challenged, subverted, and resisted external influence and control.

KEYWORDS: CIA, African literature, cultural cold war, Congress for Cultural Freedom, literary publishing, authorship, Wole Soyinka, Nat Nakasa, Bessie Head

© Caroline Davis 2020

ISBNs: 9781108725545 (PB), 9781108663229 (OC)
ISSNs: 2514-8524 (online), 2514-8516 (print)
Contents

Introduction 1

1 African Literary Publishing during Decolonisation 10

2 Wole Soyinka, the Transcription Centre, and the CIA 30

3 Nat Nakasa, *The Classic* and the Cultural Cold War 46

4 ‘The Displaced Outsider’: The Publishing Networks of Bessie Head 67

Conclusion 87

Bibliography 91