

Cold War Friendships: Korea, Vietnam, and Asian American Literature. Josephine Nock-Hee Park. Oxford UP, 2016. xi + 310 pages. \$99.00 cloth; \$29.95 paper.

At the height of the Korean War, Maxine Hong Kingston, then in the sixth grade, tormented another Chinese American girl for her timidity, for not being “friendly.” As she recounts in her classic memoir *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts* (1976), she confronted the girl in the “army green” basement of their school, where the students huddled during air raid drills (qtd. in Park 259). Cornering the girl and ordering her to talk until she herself broke down in tears, Maxine recognized her own mandate to be “friendly” in the girl. In *Cold War Friendships: Korea, Vietnam, and Asian American Literature*, Josephine Nock-Hee Park takes a closer look at how the Cold War—the “army green” basement, the air raid drills—conditions Maxine’s insistence on friendliness. Through an investigation of Asian American writing on the wars in Korea and Southeast Asia, Park follows the strange career of the Asian “friendly,” arguing that Korean and Vietnamese allies indict but also instrumentalize to their own ends the uneven relations of Cold War attachment. “The friendly is all too aware of the determining forces of Cold War division and integration,” Park writes, “and though she risks her integrity, her gestures of alliance recalibrate vectors of great power politics in order to ensure her own place within a global order” (264). As the scene from Kingston’s first memoir demonstrates, Park’s book advances a new way of reading familiar Asian American literature that reveals a story of neocolonial war and liberal contradiction but also one of Asian friendlies’ conscious self-fashioning through Cold War affiliations.

Cold War Friendships builds on and recalibrates the large bodies of work on the Korean and Vietnam Wars in the fields of Asian American studies, American cultural studies, and Cold War studies. While scholars such as Christina Klein have drawn attention to Cold War overtures of integration directed at the decolonizing nations of Asia, Park attends instead to the Asian friendlies to whom such overtures were addressed. This term, *friendlies*, emerged as a means for the Cold War state to describe weak alliances with non-Western countries and as an instrument of racialization used to distinguish those to whom it might “confer” liberal humanness (anticommunist allies) from nonhuman enemies (communist resisters). But Park’s friendlies cross over from wartime allies to Americans. They constitute what she calls “proto-Americans” (18). Thus, while

such scholars as Lisa Lowe, Susan Koshy, and Kandice Chuh have theorized Asian American studies as a critique- rather than identity-based field, Park sets out to read *pre-* rather than *post-*identity Asian America through the figure of the Cold War friendly. Her method brings to light how the United States' wars have not only reinforced racial divisions but also created and defined them.

Park's book offers more than a series of close readings, however. It uses literature as a vehicle for tracing what she calls "an Asian American genealogy of war," which exposes the violence of the Cold War state's liberal vision of its role in the world without reducing Asian American writing to a reflection of that violence (12). The book's first part, "Securing the Vietnam War," begins by considering American journalists' and filmmakers' efforts to rationalize the Korean War through South Korean friendlies imagined as allied soldiers, international students, and rescued children. It then examines three Asian American novels—Richard E. Kim's *The Martyred* (1964), Susan Choi's *The Foreign Student* (1998), and Chang-rae Lee's *The Surrendered* (2010)—that reanimate such characters to show how they contribute to, are harmed by, and yet do not abandon the Cold War ideal of integration.

The book's second part, "Reviving the War in Vietnam," traces the breakdown of such alliances in Southeast Asia through the figure of the American special agent as he evolves from bright idealist in William Lederer and Eugene Burdick's novel *The Ugly American* (1958) to lost soul in Francis Ford Coppola's film *Apocalypse Now* (1979). Park then reads Le Ly Hayslip's memoirs, Lan Cao's novel *Monkey Bridge* (1997), and Andrew X. Pham's travelogue *Catfish and Mandala* (1999) to call attention to how Asian American authors have revised the role of the Asian friendly and recentered the Vietnamese refugee in a war that has been dominated in American cultural memory by stories of wounded white veterans.

Each chapter, while organized around one writer's treatment of Korea or Vietnam, broadens to engage with state documents, news media, religious writings, and the larger histories that informed the wars. Park's final chapter, for example, takes Pham's travelogue as a framework for investigating class divisions within Vietnamese American refugee communities and the Asian sex trade created to accommodate American soldiers. Pham's memoir reverses the terms of the Cold War friendly. After the suicide of his transsexual brother, Minh, Andrew, an American whose family fled Vietnam in 1976, refuses the "model minority" assimilationist narrative and abandons his career as an aeronautical engineer to return to his birth country. Yet, back in Vietnam, he discovers that he has been transformed from Asian *friendly* to American *friend* and thus remains caught within the Cold War logic of weak, uneven alliances. Through a consideration of Pham's later work as a translator and coauthor with his father, Park shows how he, at last, transcends the confining terms of Cold War integration through the formation of a different order of alliance.

Cold War Friendships brings subtle attention to the contradictions and inconsistencies of the literature it reads, making its argument less categorical but also, for the same reason, truer to the archive. Park argues that Asian American literature may challenge the Cold War state and sometimes offer a humanitarian salve but cannot be reduced to the either/or categories (capitalism/communism, friend/enemy) that guided the wars it remembers. Her book reveals Asian American writing to be a valuable site from which to consider that complexity and its effacement. As Park concludes, “The experience of Asian Americans makes it all too clear that wars are not the exception, but rather the means by which norms are set” (15).

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