

***The Racial Imaginary of the Cold War Kitchen: From Sokol'niki Park to Chicago's South Side.* By Kate A. Baldwin. Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press. 2016. xviii, 236 pp. Cloth, \$85.00; paper, \$45.00; e-book, \$39.99.**

***Reading America: Citizenship, Democracy, and Cold War Literature.* By Kristin L. Matthews. Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press. 2016. ix, 207 pp. Cloth, \$90.00; paper, \$29.95.**

A model kitchen served as the venue for one of the defining events of the Cold War. On July 24, 1959, Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev went head-to-head at the American National Exhibition in Moscow, part of a cultural exchange program between the United States and the Soviet Union, with Nixon pointing to the labor-saving appliances of the model kitchen as evidence of what capitalism had done for the average American and could do for the average Soviet. ABC, CBS, and NBC all broadcast the “kitchen debate,” as American media dubbed it, the next day. The debate raised Nixon’s profile and established him as a front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination. It set the tone for a rising generation of cold warriors. Kate A. Baldwin begins *The Racial Imaginary of the Cold War Kitchen: From Sokol'niki Park to Chicago's South Side* here, in the Cold War kitchen.

It may seem an unremarkable place to begin a book about the Cold War, but the kitchen debate and events like it have received less attention in recent years. These days Cold War studies has shifted from a two- to a three-worlds model, attending to how the conflict was triangulated in Asia, where it was as much about colonialism and imperialism as about capitalism and communism. Asian American studies scholars such as Jodi Kim, Christina Klein, and Josephine Park have led that transformation. Other scholars, following the example of Mary Dudziak, Brenda Plummer, and Penny Von Eschen, have investigated how the Cold War facilitated and limited freedom struggles within the United States. Now Baldwin and Kristin L. Matthews have returned to the Cold War of the United States and the Soviet Union to challenge the two-worlds model from within, to see what the lessons of the new Cold War studies can teach us about the old.

Baldwin traces the absences of the modular suburban kitchen in which Nixon celebrated the freedom of consumer choice. Nixon’s vision of the American home hid the material realities of the kitchen as a site of women’s labor and racial segregation. Through literature, film, architecture, and fashion, Baldwin shows how the Cold War kitchen turned a capitalist domestic ideal into a cultural weapon in a diplomatic war with the Soviet Union. That ideal depended on the erasure of the gender and racial inequalities and

American Literature, Volume 90, Number 3, September 2018
DOI 10.1215/00029831-6994979 © 2018 by Duke University Press

working-class labor that built and sustained the middle-class suburban home. It was an ideal that suffered from internal contradictions and external challenges from American and Soviet women who articulated alternative ways of inhabiting the Cold War kitchen. If the kitchen debate shows how a Kitchen-Aid mixer could aid US empire building, it also, Baldwin writes, “offers an opportunity to observe instances of this idea’s undoing” and to see “how this universal space was not only resisted, but refused and returned in ways that did not correlate with U.S. expectations” (12).

Her book follows that undoing through a wide range of American and Soviet literature and media, including the architecture and visual technologies of the American National Exhibition (chapter 1), Sylvia Plath’s *The Bell Jar* (1963; chapter 2), the fiction of Alice Childress and Natalya Baranskaya (chapter 3), Lorraine Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959; chapter 4), and high fashion (chapter 5). Although the chapters sometimes wander, as it seems that there is no part of the Cold War archive that is not animated by the domestic politics that Baldwin takes on, they also feature some surprising and revealing pairings. The third chapter, for example, brings together Childress’s *Like One of the Family* (1956) and Baranskaya’s *A Week like Any Other* (1969) to show how African American and Soviet women countered the discourse of the Cold War kitchen, reintroducing the racial and gender politics it effaced by engaging the crises of women’s labor under capitalism and communism. Though set on different continents and written more than a decade apart, their novels “offer a means through which we might transform the kitchen into a speaking place of broader sociality” (100). Baldwin begins at the propaganda-driven American National Exhibition but ends by locating an uneven but material feminist transnationalism of the Cold War kitchen.

Matthews’s *Reading America* also revisits the cultural Cold War but with greater attention to the construction of a world-facing nationalism within the United States. This nationalism was tied to the act of reading, she argues, as anticommunists, civil rights activists, student radicals, feminists, and neoconservatives all embraced reading culture as a vehicle for maintaining or revising the meaning of America. Although reading has long served a nation-building function, as Benedict Anderson established, cold warriors wedded that function to a new global ambition. “From the schoolhouse, to the White House, to the publishing house, people promoted reading as both the fruit and the mechanism of spreading democracy,” Matthews writes (3). Organizations including the American Library Association, the American Book Publishers Council, the National Book Committee, and the US Office of Education published reading guides encouraging the idea that, with the right book and the right method, Americans could perform democratic citizenship through reading. As Carl Solberg, the editor of *Time*, wrote in 1953, reading good books and lots of them would make you “an alert member of the American democracy” (quoted on 10).

But Matthews is less interested in what officials and organizations had to say about reading than how writers themselves modeled it for their readers. After charting the history of reading and Cold War nationalism, the book moves through some of the best-selling novels of the period by J. D. Salinger (chapter 2), Ralph Ellison (chapter 3), Thomas Pynchon (chapter 4), John Barth (chapter 5), and Maxine Hong Kingston (chapter 6). The one-novel-per-chapter format can be limiting at times, but Matthews finds something new to say about much-studied titles by reading *reading* within them. The final chapter shows how Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (1976) models a "synthetic" reading ethic that offers a different angle on the culture wars in which it became entangled, demanding that the novel's readers refuse "either-ors" and instead reach for a "both-and" (153). Kingston is part of what Matthews identifies as a broad movement throughout the Cold War to democratize reading by inviting new forms of reading and knowing.

When President Donald Trump and Russian president Vladimir Putin, a former KGB officer, met for the first time in Hamburg, Germany, the *New York Times* described it as an epic encounter, as it once had the kitchen debate between Nixon and Khrushchev. The circumstances in Hamburg were far different, of course, but there is no doubt that the Cold War—and the racial and gender politics it gave rise to—is still with us. Baldwin's and Matthews's cultural histories take us back to that Cold War future.

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