

Abstract American racial politics during the long Korean War formed what this essay terms *Afro-Asian antagonism*, a racial hate between African Americans and Asians (and Asian Americans). When the Truman administration issued Executive Order 9981 and proclaimed its commitment to military racial integration in 1948, two years before the outbreak of the Korean War, it seemed to signal a significant step of racial progress. Black servicemen who enlisted in the “liberalized” military, however, were strategically deployed to represent American national violence, especially to the eyes of Asians who were internalizing antiblack racism imported from the United States through the military apparatus. In the face of decolonization and an upsurge in civil rights movements, this article argues, the executive order molded Black Korean War veterans into an instrument to abort Afro-Asian connections while promoting racial liberalism to a global audience. The Korean War inaugurated the American Cold War racial formation that endures into the twenty-first century. Contrasting two Korean War novels written by Asian American and African American authors—Nora Okja Keller’s *Fox Girl* (2002) and Toni Morrison’s *Home* (2012)—this article traces how Afro-Asian orphans and a Black veteran internalize and challenge the Afro-Asian antagonisms of the long Korean War.

Keywords Afro-Asia, Executive Order 9981, Toni Morrison, Nora Okja Keller

On September 15, 1945, W. E. B. Du Bois contributed an article titled “The Winds of Time” to the Black newspaper *Chicago Defender*. “Now that the Second World War has ended,” he begins, “what have we Americans of Negro descent lost and gained?” In answering the question, he itemizes five “losses” and six “gains” as consequences of World War II from an African American perspective. A month after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, this Black intellectual known for his enthusiastic support of imperial Japan laments “the defeat and humiliation of Japan,” that is, “the greatest colored nation which has risen to leadership in modern times.” For Du Bois, World War II was not an American victory but a defeat of people of

color that counted as a loss. He then draws a bigger picture in the gains portion: “We have been compelled to admit Asia into the picture of future political and democratic power” to the extent that “the development of human beings in the future is going to depend largely upon what happens in Asia.” Though the dream of Japan’s victory over white violence collapsed, he prognosticates, the future of people of color hinged on Asia as a whole. In fact, the early and mid–Cold War era witnessed the height of Afro-Asian solidarity, an interracial and transnational movement that fought American racial violence at home and abroad—Du Bois himself formed a friendship with Mao Zedong; Martin Luther King Jr. received inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi’s nonviolence; and Black Nationalists were fascinated with Maoist China and Ho Chi Minh’s Vietnam. The Afro-Asia (Bandung) Conference was held in 1955, and Richard Wright’s report, *The Color Curtain* (1956), situated the American “Negro problem” in a global context. American domestic racial violence was “so deeply entrenched in U.S. society,” as Gerald Horne (2018: 11) maintains, that “it required external forces, global currents, to alter profoundly this tragic state of affairs.” As early as the 1940s, African American intellectuals formed a consensus that American racism and militarism must be resisted via Afro-Asian radicalism. Black civil rights movements have been bolstered by imaginary and concrete transpacific connections with Asian comrades.

Three years after the Du Bois article and two years before the outbreak of the Korean War, President Harry S. Truman (1948) issued Executive Order 9981, proclaiming the administration’s commitment to the “equality of treatment and opportunity for all those who serve in our country’s defense . . . without regard to race, color, religion or national origin.” Truman’s action appeared to be a drastic improvement of what Du Bois (1945) had castigated in the *Chicago Defender*: “the tremendous disadvantage of a ‘jim-crow’ army and of segregation in army circles which will form and have formed a basis of similar segregation in civil life.” With military segregation as a “basis” for anti-black racism, its abolition signaled a significant step of racial progress. Indeed, Truman’s order sanctioning Black men’s “right to fight” has often been characterized as a model for the desegregation policies in the civil rights era that followed. But why did desegregation begin with military institutions? The first answer is that the Truman administration needed more bodies. Armed conflict was already imminent on the Korean Peninsula, which had been divided and ruled by the United States and the Soviet Union since 1945. After the Department

of the Army approved General Matthew Ridgway's recommendation in 1951 to assign Black troops to all units throughout Korea, the American military was incrementally desegregated over the course of the three-year combat in Korea (Bowers et al. 1996: xiii). By this account, the executive order granting African Americans—whose population at the time amounted to 10 percent of the United States—the “freedom to serve” was a barter for a partial concession on civil rights.

Yet the military racial integration that began in Korea also ushered in another racial conflict. Because of racial “equality” in the armed forces, every soldier came to be “equally” entitled to represent American national violence regardless of one's skin color. As Brigadier General John Michaelis declared in 1951, “There's no color line in a fox-hole”¹—American warfare was rendered color-blind. Its use of force was no longer a race war but a “police action” against the encroachment of illiberal ideology, a new threat after fascism. No sooner had Black soldiers been enlisted in the “liberalized” military than they became assimilated into the logic of the Cold War American warfare state wreaking formally deracialized violence. After the armistice—not a peace treaty—in 1953, however, the figure of the Black soldier, having acquired global visibility, faced deferred and enduring effects in Asia. In the devastated postwar landscape inhabited by American military personnel, Koreans internalized American racism imported and ingrained through the apparatus of permanent war, and they learned to hate Black servicemen as representative perpetrators who brought about the devastation. By pitting Black victimizers against Asian victims, I argue, the long Korean War engendered a new racial hate, which I term *Afro-Asian antagonism*. Behind the escalation of Afro-Asian movements, the racial animosity inaugurated in Korea prevented Black veterans from imagining solidarity with Asians and vice versa. Truman's Executive Order 9981 molded Black veterans of the Korean War into an instrument to abort Afro-Asian political links while, in the age of decolonization and civil rights movements, promoting Cold War racial liberalism to a global audience. When the American war machine was liberalized, its racist foundation manifested itself in the form of the militarized Black body in the far-flung Korean Peninsula. Interrogating how American official discourse enacted, propagated, and perpetuated Afro-Asian antagonism through warmaking and lawmaking, I will historicize the Korean War as a key moment of America's transnational race-making enterprise. American racialization and militarization became mutually constitutive and dialectically productive after Korea.

The Afro-Asian framework has attracted growing critical interest over the past two decades, as seen in studies by Marc Gallicchio (2000), Vijay Prashad (2001), Yuichiro Onishi (2013), and Gerald Horne (2018) and in several anthologies such as *AfroAsian Encounters* (2006) edited by Heike Raphael-Hernandez and Shannon Steen and *Afro Asia* (2018) edited by Fred Ho and Bill V. Mullen. As signaled by the words included in these titles, such as “connections,” “solidarities,” and “encounters,” a major portion of Afro-Asia studies has sought to articulate, excavate, and imagine the interracial links between two groups of people of color. In contrast to these studies, Claire Jean Kim (2000) and Julia H. Lee (2011) shed light on the “negative” side of Afro-Asian relationalities. Historicizing the longstanding Black-Korean conflict in American society, they demonstrate how the conflict has been structurally instigated by white racial dominance. Building on and bridging both strands of Afro-Asian studies, I turn to fictional narratives as a terrain where the “positive” and “negative” sides coincide and converge. Literature is fit for illustrating subjects who, though not willingly, are imbued with racist ideology and unable to actualize or even imagine the need for interracial solidarities. Since Afro-Asian antagonism was strategically (and successfully) implemented through “ordinary” people and their everyday lives, we must closely examine how those Afro-Asian subjects were conditioned to internalize that ideology *and* how they might have challenged it. Afro-Asian stories demand us to ask: when African American and Asian subjects who find themselves having already subscribed to Afro-Asian antagonism encounter an idea of Afro-Asian connection from which they feel alienated, how would it be possible for them to retrieve the affective motivation to move toward solidarity? It is through examining this kind of nonintellectual, nonpolitical, and nonliberal subject’s conversion—or the failure thereof—that we can cast a new light on an unexpectedly radical possibility for Afro-Asian solidarity. By bringing racist characters into the conversation about race making, literature reminds us how “unenlightened” people are as political and politicized as liberal intellectuals who commit themselves to political activism.² Afro-Asian Korean War stories empower us to study racial antagonism and friendship not as mutually exclusive but as historically co-constitutive.

In this context, Afro-Asian antagonism and friendship captured in (long) Korean War narratives by Asian, Asian American, and African American authors emerge within a collective struggle to envision other Afro-Asian channels for unification after internalizing racial and racist animosities. To chronicle how Afro-Asian antagonism was made

during and after the Korean War, I begin by sketching the post-World War II historical background against which civil rights movements, due to the Truman administration's manipulation of the Korean War as an effective race-making machine, emerged as a politics against not only racism but also militarism. Second, considering American national discourse and cultural representations that strategically reframed the implications of race and color during the Cold War, I illustrate how Afro-Asian antagonism was established against the background of supposedly benevolent whiteness. Finally, I turn to two Korean War novels, Nora Okja Keller's *Fox Girl* (2002) and Toni Morrison's *Home* (2012), as critical interventions to the Cold War militarization and racialization. Capturing the lived experience of Korean orphans and a Black serviceman, respectively, both stories, when read together, illuminate how the characters struggle to reclaim Afro-Asian solidarity after Korea.

Afro-Asian Antagonism and the Long Korean War

Black activists increasingly called for military desegregation before World War II. The movement is best known by the Double V campaign, a struggle against fascism abroad and Jim Crow at home that emerged as a counter to the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940.³ At that time, the state's use of force was already understood as undergirded by its strategic representation of race to both domestic and global audiences. As Kimberley L. Phillips (2012: 20–22) demonstrates, the Department of War and the Office of War Information collaboratively sought to underrepresent the military contributions of “Negro soldiers” during the war. The whiteness of American military activity was inviolable because state officials presumed the Second World War to be “good” and “just”; it was the white soldiers who bravely fought evil abroad in a mission to protect the liberal world. In the wake of World War II, however, not only did Black activists' movements targeting military racial policies gain momentum but also the Truman administration experienced a shortage of soldiers and was forced to reconsider the so-called Negro Policy. For Black activists, the postwar situation constituted “an unprecedented opportunity to end segregation not just in the armed services but in the entire society as well” (Phillips 2012: 67). The next military conflict in East Asia was already on the horizon—Korea seemed to offer an “unprecedented opportunity” for African Americans.

The problems of American militarism and racism were not confined to domestic racial politics. In the decolonizing world after World War

II, racial segregation in American military facilities, as a kind of representative of American power abroad, was beginning to be viewed as correlated to its domestic racial violence. It was within this transnational racial-political situation that Truman's Executive Order 9981 was announced. The president first convened the Gillem Board in 1945, which would circulate the "Utilization of Negro Manpower in the Postwar Army Policy" the following year, and the Fahy Committee supervised the implementation of the Executive Order issued in 1948 and released its report, *Freedom to Serve*, immediately before the outbreak of the Korean War. It appeared that the government was, no matter how reluctantly, beginning to remedy its racist policies. The *Chicago Defender* (1948) did not fail to herald Truman's decision with a looming headline, celebrating it as a "dramatic and historic move." The post-World War II and pre-Korean War era also represented an "unprecedented opportunity" for the Truman administration to advertise the dramatic inauguration of American Cold War racial liberalism, and the Executive Order enjoyed an enthusiastic welcome (Phillips 2012: 117–21). In the early Cold War climate, the Korean War offered a fulcrum for state policymakers to bring African American protests and international criticism under control.

The idea that the Korean War had a liberalizing effect was widely promoted through the cultural representation of East Asian yellowness. As literary and cultural critics such as Josephine Nock-Hee Park (2016), Christina Klein (2003), Daniel Y. Kim (2020), and Sunny Xiang (2020) have demonstrated, "the racial ambiguity between Oriental enemies and Asian friends" (Xiang 2020: 6) was foregrounded in the postwar period. This representational negotiation finds its best expression in the American depiction of Asians, which shifted from the "yellow peril" framework to a more friendly kind of stereotype.⁴ Some early Hollywood Korean War films, such as *One Minute to Zero* (1952) and *Battle Hymn* (1957), Daniel Y. Kim (2020: 9) argues, helped "justify the American intervention in Korea on humanitarian grounds, highlighting the role that US servicemen played as protectors and saviors of Korean war orphans." By telling a racialized story in which white American soldiers rescue Asian victims from the violence that they, Americans, had created in the first place, these stories cast the Korean War as an altruistic mission carried out by an arbiter of liberal humanitarianism.⁵ It was not so much the reality of the Korean War as the narrativization thereof that disseminated the idea that Cold War America was securing a racially harmonious world order that needed defending from illiberal ideologies. This is why war fiction becomes a critical terrain for

advancing counternarratives to imagine otherwise—the stories of the long Korean War reveal racist and militarist foundations undergirding these strategic demarcations of color lines between white, black, and yellow. How, then, were Koreans and African Americans led to hate each other through the war—how did the American Cold War racialization materialize through and as militarization?

Korea was the first to encounter racially integrated American military power, which left an indelible impact on its citizens' perceptions of race. During and after the conflict, Koreans were initiated into American racism *that was militarized from the very beginning*. Through interviews she conducted with South Koreans, Nadia Y. Kim (2008: 91–95) documents how they perceived American military personnel while under US occupation. Whereas whiteness had been introduced through positive figures like cultural celebrities, Koreans' "exposure to Blacks was largely limited to soldiers and unsavory mass media stereotypes." As one interviewee, a Korean immigrant in the United States, attests, "When I first saw Black people was when they came to Korea as military personnel. Because their looks were dark, their appearance looked bad to me." In bars and clubs around US bases and camptowns, violent incidents involving African Americans in uniform were constantly witnessed (Moon 1997: 70–71), which helped solidify the stereotype of "black violence" against Asians, as is still tangible today.⁶ Though American global warfare was formally deracialized, the uneven distribution of US-generated violence between Black and white was vividly registered by Koreans. It was dark-skinned soldiers, in Koreans' eyes, who perpetuated American violence in their devastated homeland. When the Truman administration began to "utilize negro manpower," it did so by exporting militarized blackness to be fully represented abroad. Despite white Americans' anti-racist endeavors, goes their racist argument, uneducated, low-class Black soldiers would not behave in Asia. In this way, the long Korean War's racial strategy formed Afro-Asian antagonism.

African American soldiers also came to deeply distrust their Asian "allies." According to Michael Cullen Green (2010: 113), "American servicemen moving up the peninsula encountered streams of South Korean troops headed in the opposite direction," resulting in "an abiding bitterness among officers and enlisted men who believed they were fighting and dying for a people too cowardly—or too disloyal—to do the same." Unable to imagine how Koreans perceived the US-led coalition's activity, American military personnel harbored and displayed growing distrust against Korean "friends" who were no longer

willing to extend the war. The effect of this distrust on African American soldiers was twofold: “black military service in Korea,” Green continues, “encouraged African Americans to hold racialized attitudes toward Asian peoples, while increasing their support both for the war and for their nation’s growing military empire in Asia” (110). Warfare had long been a site where African Americans could demand equality, and Korea represented an unprecedented opportunity in the fight against racism. When their call seemed to be answered by Truman, however, this meant at once disidentification from East Asians and, more important, identification with *American militarism*. “By the end of the war,” Green concludes, “most black soldiers had come to identify with American military power in Korea and to eschew a race-based interpretation of U.S. policy in the region” (133). Pushing further, I would contend that it was through the “experimental war” in Korea that the American Cold War racial tactics were established, and the making of Afro-Asian antagonism was at the tactics’ core.

The mutual hostility between African Americans and Koreans has led them to misrepresent and underrepresent each other, which is why the study of Afro-Asian antagonism demands a comparative approach. While other Afro-Asian Korean War stories such as Susan Choi’s *The Foreign Student* (1998), Chang-rae Lee’s *A Gesture Life* (1999), and Kim Ki-duk’s film *Address Unknown* (2001) all portray some consequences of Afro-Asian antagonism, I examine Keller’s *Fox Girl* and Morrison’s *Home* not only because these texts focus on racist perceptions harbored by Korean and Black subjects but also because bringing them together throws into relief the elisions and deformations in Afro-Asian texts. Keller’s and Morrison’s novels do intervene in Afro-Asian problematics through the eyes of Afro-Asian orphans and a Black vet, respectively, but the intervention is not brought about in an explicit manner; rather, the novels directly embody and testify to how Koreans and African Americans were conditioned to internalize Afro-Asian antagonisms. For Keller’s Korean protagonist, Black servicemen are essentially ugly and violent creatures; for Morrison’s Black vet, Koreans are no more than apparitional and fragmented figures that he fantasizes he has saved. Examining how African Americans and Koreans represented each other in early twentieth-century literature, Julia H. Lee (2011: 6) demonstrates how both Black people and Korean people “require the other’s presence in order to articulate themselves as national and racialized subjects.” Keller’s and Morrison’s novels capture the ways in which characters construct their subjectivities through racist antagonisms toward each other. Regulated by the structure of

the long Korean War, they *fail* to extricate themselves from mutual animosities; neither story fully articulates what should be done in order to sublimate Afro-Asian antagonism into a basis for interracial solidarity. When brought together, however, the two complementary “failures” resonate with each other, and their Afro-Asian antagonisms reveal their new critical potential.

Afro-Asian Orphans in Nora Okja Keller’s *Fox Girl*

Keller’s *Fox Girl* vividly illustrates the wretched postwar lives of Korean sex workers from the perspective of Afro-Asian children, who are invariably doomed to replicate their parents’ livelihoods. In Chollak, a satellite camptown for the Kunsan Air Base on the Western coast of South Korea,⁷ “the GIs divided the streets into white section and black section,” as narrated by the protagonist Hyun Jin, where Koreans are accustomed to the pejorative terms of “pale *miguks* and dark *gomshis*” (Keller 2002b: 5) for white and Black servicemen. Hyun Jin occupies a liminal racial positionality compared to the other main characters, Sookie and Lobetto, two American Koreans born with dark skin, signaling their African American blood. Though Hyun Jin’s parents are both “pure” Koreans (this later turns out to be uncertain), she has a conspicuous birthmark on her face, the “stained side” in her own words, for which she and Sookie are bullied: “Your father must be a U.S. darkie!” (4). The central focus of the novel is how the residual military segregation maintained in American camptowns damages and divides postwar Korean lives, irrevocably racializing, sexualizing, and hierarchizing American-Korean relations. When asked in an interview why she focused on “black GIs,” Keller (2002a: 5) refers to her intention to represent “GI girls” specializing in Black customers in their position “at the lowest rung of America Town’s social hierarchy” and, even lower, their Afro-Asian children, who are “invisible, considered neither Korean nor American.” *Fox Girl* is an effort to cast a light on these young pariahs by locating them amid the American race-making in Asia during the early Cold War era. As a result of the perpetuation of American warfare materially embodied and consolidated by the military base, antiblack racism was deeply engrained in the Korean psyche, cultivating the Afro-Asian antagonism that would manifest not only between African Americans and Koreans but also among racialized Koreans. By capturing the transpacific migratory movement of Afro-Asian subjects, *Fox Girl* addresses the possibility and difficulty of achieving Afro-Asian solidarity after the war.

Not only were most Koreans unfamiliar with racial others, they, with their caste system and deep-rooted Confucian authoritarianism, were also historically imbued with the glorification of “pure blood” (Kim 2008: 83–87). This nationalist ideology is best expressed in the novel by Hyun Jin’s mother who, repeatedly asserting “Blood will always tell” (Keller 2002a: 51), prohibits her daughter from playing with “*tweggi*” (children of mixed breed). While Prashad (2001: 36) argues that we must remember the “polycultural” constitution of our cultures and identities, as opposed to the myth of racial purity that white supremacism promotes, this binary proves inadequate when considering the process of racial formation in Korea during the Cold War. Korean people had long upheld their version of ethnonationalist supremacism that was exacerbated by the transplantation of American racism. “When the Americans first ventured off the base and into our neighborhoods,” Hyun Jin reminisces, “we thought that they—with their high noses, round eyes, and skin either too white or too dark—were ugly. . . . Slowly, though, we began to view their features as desirable, developing a taste for larger noses, double lids, and cow eyes” (Keller 2002a: 14). Of course, what they come to desire are white features; in turn, they learn that it is only “too dark” skin that looks “ugly.” When Hyun Jin and Sookie encounter Chazu, an African American customer-boyfriend of Sookie’s mother, their unreserved reaction speaks to the complete internalization of this racism; in their eyes, this “black dog” looks and talks “like a trained monkey saying a very polite ‘How do you do?’ before it bites” (12). When American racism was grafted onto Korean society, it remolded and expanded traditional Korean class consciousness, ranging from whites at the top to the *tweggi* at—or even below—the bottom.

It is noteworthy that the girls perceive Chazu as about to “bite” them. Throughout the novel, it is almost always Black officers who engage in acts of violence. After a skirmish between Sookie and Chazu at the all-Black bar Club Foxa, Chazu chases Sookie. Hyun Jin secretly follows Chazu because she is “afraid he [is] going to kill her.” Her anxiety stems from the murder of another Korean sex worker by a Black soldier just two months prior because, according to Lobetto, the girl asked him to marry her and take her to the United States. Even though her corpse was found “with an umbrella wedged into her vagina,” the Military Police “ruled her death a suicide” (138). This incidence calls for an understanding of the “Black violence” discourse as sponsored and sanctioned by the structure of American Cold War militarism expanding across the Pacific. The predominance of Black

violence in this novel is not merely a matter of the author's preference; the ratio of African American soldiers in Asia was disproportionately high because American "policymakers' desire to keep them out of postwar Europe channeled black soldiers to Japan" (Green 2010: 109), where most were then relocated to Korea. At one point, a character offers a seemingly derogatory but in fact historically accurate observation: "How could America have so many *gomshis*? I thought they sent them all here" (Keller 2002a: 97). Within the global structure of the American warfare state, the risk of Black violence was strategically relegated to Asia, which gave rise to the impression that Black soldiers are committing violence in Asia.

The sexually symbolic manner of killing—an umbrella in the vagina—is a typical iteration of Japanese wartime atrocities throughout Asia and the Pacific, an implication that the author of the novel *Comfort Woman* (1997), Keller's first, would never miss.⁸ Recent transpacific scholars, including Naoki Sakai, Lisa Yoneyama (2016), and Laura Hyun Yi Kang (2020), have demonstrated that the American Cold War strategy in Asia must be considered with postwar Japan-US transpacific interimperiality in mind. As Sakai observes (Sakai and Yoo 2012: 1, 7–8), "the United States inherited Japan's Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity sphere, and East Asia was re-organized in the transition from one imperial nationalism to another," thereby allowing Japan to "maintain its neo-imperial positioning in relation to its Asian neighbors despite the loss of its empire." Soon enough, the Korean War inaugurated and consolidated this mechanism; thanks to this enterprise, postwar Japan experienced the so-called Korean War boom, an economic upsurge that would be repeated between Korea and Vietnam, engendering yet another intra-Asian antagonism. The perpetuation of war is a pivotal instrument of transpacific interimperialism. As David Vine (2020: 3, 195) argues, "the construction of bases abroad has actually made aggressive, offensive war *more likely*" throughout American history, and Korea represents a remarkable upturn: "After a period of significant base closures during post-World War II demobilization, the Korean War led to a 40 percent increase in the number of overseas bases." By creating war-struck wastelands and building military bases over them, the American warfare state expanded its power by continuing to produce extraterritorial domains in which impoverished and exhausted nations need white protection. Elucidating the continuum between two imperial powers, *Fox Girl* situates Korea at the cusp of an interimperial transition from Japan to the United States.

Keller adds Afro-Asian problematics into this perspective of inter-imperial critique, further complicating the transpacific racial cartography in East Asia. This entanglement manifests when the novel reveals the secret of Hyun Jin's birth. In 1945, Hyun Jin's father and Sookie's mother, Duk Hee, managed to return to their hometown of Paekdu on the North Korean mountain along the Chinese border—Manchuria, a theretofore Japanese colony and a “distant gestation” of the Korean War (Cumings 2010: xv–xvi)—only to find it completely ruined. They decide to head south together and arrive at Chollak, where there is no way for Duk Hee to make a living other than sex work. Hyun Jin's father gets married and the couple struggles to have a child. Eventually, despite the wife's protestations, the three of them make a bargain: in exchange for money, Duk Hee gives birth to the couple's child as a surrogate mother. This means two things for Hyun Jin: she and Sookie are half-sisters and, crucially, her biological father is uncertain owing to the nature of Duk Hee's profession. As Duk Hee's clients are exclusively Black GIs, Hyun Jin, who has been proud of her “pure” Korean blood, might be half-Black, an ambiguity to which her “ugly” birthmark now loudly attests. When Hyun Jin learns of her secret past via Sookie and Duk Hee, her father, to our surprise, coldly expels his daughter from their home, which compels her to become a sex worker just as her biological mother and sister had to do—“Blood will always tell.” Though the reader is not informed of the details, this unexpected move might suggest that Hyun Jin's father has less power than his wife, perhaps because he was taken in by a local, well-to-do family running a store. *Fox Girl* thus aligns Korean nationalism, Japanese colonialism, and American military racism through the convoluted historical background of its “Afro-Asian” protagonist.

Hyun Jin's racial ambiguity is a literary expression of the new mechanism of American racialization that emerged after World War II. While American war making and race making have been concomitant since colonial settlements (Singh 2017: xi–xii, 182), their primary mechanism underwent a significant shift in the postwar era when it was liberalized and deracialized on the surface. “As white supremacy gradually became residual after World War II,” Jodi Melamed (2011: 1, 3) writes, “it was replaced by a formally antiracist, liberal-capitalist modernity”—racial liberalism—and it “extended racialization procedures beyond color lines.” The replacement signaled the end of “color-line racialization”: as “racialized privilege and stigma need not reference phenotype,” Melamed continues, “traditionally recognized racial identities—Black, Asian, white, Arab—occupy both sides of the privilege/stigma divide” (13). Racial identities are no longer only

determined by one's biological data; the lines of racialization are drawn and redrawn on an ad hoc basis, and warfare has always provided the reasons thereof. Hyun Jin embodies this new mechanism of race making by crossing the "privilege/stigma divide." At the beginning of the story, this "pure" Korean appears to be the most privileged girl in the neighborhood, assigned the position of "class leader" as the smartest student, the daughter of store-managing parents, and providing Sookie with food when necessary. Her stable foothold is shattered when her biological father's identity is questioned, yet it is not necessarily that she has proven to be a tweggi; rather, she has always occupied a precarious position, and what is divulged here is the very precarity itself, an arbitrary and flexible characteristic of American racialization. She becomes racialized regardless of her (im) purity. When schoolboys, including Lobetto, tease her, they call her "Hyung" Jin, adding a *g* to her original name meaning "wise truth," thereby rendering it "scarred truth" (Keller 2002a: 4). For a girl steeped in Korean nationalism, what is exposed is indeed her "scarred truth."

Hyun Jin's racial instability also troubles the Black-white color line that is supposed to be rigidly drawn within the American military base. Having disclosed her "scarred truth," she is forced to degrade herself by turning to sex work; her body is simultaneously racialized and sexualized. In the pitiful scene of her first job, which the novel calls "honeymooning," we catch a glimpse of a crucial moment that tends to elude representation in the shadow of Black GIs: white violence. Lobetto, a professional pimp, takes Hyun Jin to an area, "trespassing, crossing over to the white sections of America Town" (150) where he expects to make a better deal than in the all-Black sections. There, Hyun Jin is raped by three white soldiers who take "turns at the stations of her body" (153), a clear implication that the war continues even after the armistice in forms other than military combat—in this case in a sexualized form, as is repeatedly emphasized throughout the novel (22, 29, 195). When Hyun Jin discovers that she is pregnant after her first "honeymoon," she is tricked into aborting the baby despite her firm resolution to give birth to it. In this world, she is only permitted to cross the Afro-Asian color line, not the white-yellow one. True, American postwar racialization has incessantly created new races. In considering American Cold War race makings, however, we must ask which races have been created, which subjects can cross the newly drawn divisions, and which types of subordination and antagonism are produced. At the juncture of sexualization and racialization, Hyun Jin bears witness to the fact that racial stigma and hatred are strategically and unevenly distributed among people of color.

Thematizing immigration and the Korean diaspora, *Fox Girl* offers a transnational, transpacific perspective from which to discern the global continuum of American militarized violence.⁹ After his African American father returned to the United States, Lobetto dreamed of being brought there. A cherished letter from his father reads, “I’m thinking of you. I haven’t forgotten you. I been working hard to bring you to America, but the man is trying to keep us down” (97). The letter alludes to an address delivered by “Dr. King” (95) in Washington, DC, and was written after Martin Luther King Jr.’s 1963 “I Have a Dream” speech, though Lobetto would have been unaware of this background. At that time, American immigration policy was gradually shifting toward a more inclusionary stance on Asians, as epitomized by the 1952 McCarran Walter Act and, more decisively, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act that did away with immigration quotas based on nationality. However, “whether that determination is expressed through immigration ‘exclusion’ or ‘inclusion,’” as Lisa Lowe (1996: 10) opines, “the U.S. nation-state attempts to ‘produce’ and regulate the Asians as a means of ‘resolving’ economic exigencies.” Here, American racial discourse is intertwined with capitalist logic; there would be little chance for an orphaned pimp to be deemed contributive by a gatekeeper of American national borders. Whether or not Lobetto’s father is telling his son the truth, this Afro-Asian family is not allowed to reunite due to US-led global militarism and capitalism; the Korean son is doomed to be *forgotten* by his father, a Black Korean War vet. Immigration policy, a legal instrument for implementing racialization, operates as a divisive apparatus that enforces obliviousness, structurally hindering potential Afro-Asian encounters throughout the transpacific.

Yet national borders are essentially porous. Later in the novel, a woman called Mrs. Yoon appears at Club Foxa, announcing that she is “looking for girls to work . . . in Hawai’i” (Keller 2002a: 210), and Hyun Jin and Sookie leap at the opportunity. Hawaii, an archipelago charged with transpacific and interimperial history par excellence, is “in America now” (212) having acquired its statehood in 1959. “No slaves in America,” promises Mrs. Yoon. To work in Hawaii, Hyun Jin and Sookie have to forge their identity as visitors following Mrs. Yoon’s directions, and the migration, to their surprise (especially for Lobetto), turns out to be almost anticlimactically easy. Sex work does offer a way out of their miserable life in Korea, provided that it serves the capitalist logic described by Lowe. Whether inclusionary or exclusionary, legal or illegal, the scrutiny of “The Immigration Man” (229) is permeable with the aid of an agent versed in the rules of American capitalism. The

girls' sexualized bodies are a lucrative commodity whose passage is tacitly approved by the transpacific capitalist network. It is no wonder then that, in Hawaii, Hyun Jin immediately recognizes that "three thousand miles away from Korea," she is "still trapped in America Town" (269). At Hawai'i Foxa, a branch of Korea's Club Foxa, they are expected to do the same "honeymoons." While this signals the transpacific continuity of American militarist violence, the customers in Hawaii are multiracial (including Asians) and are not in uniform; they indeed look "liberalized." Hyun Jin and Sookie's migration reveals that the transpacific expansion of American capitalism entangled with militarism, racism, and sexism can be sustained in a color-blind and multicultural form. It integrates any racial subjects into its mechanics on a global scale regardless of the "privilege/stigma divide," thus supporting the liberalist pretext that material inequality can no longer be attributed to racism.

The novel recounts three versions of the fox girl story, folklore that permeates the East Asian cultural sphere, in which a fox can freely transform into other beings, typically a beautiful woman who seduces and eats boys. The first two versions are contrasted while Duk Hee is lecturing the girls on how to apply face makeup to trick Americans, "a disguise" to "move through" (25) a world brimming with violence. In the version Hyun Jin heard from her father, fox girls are "evil creatures" that devour innocent boys. For Duk Hee and her daughter, on the other hand, the fox girl is "only trying to regain what those boys stole from her." Whereas Hyun Jin simply abhors the abstract idea of violence and sympathizes with "victims," Duk Hee, a first-generation victim of and witness to two consecutive wars, alerts her daughters to the historical context of the act of violence. "I suppose it depends on who tells the story" (26)—she warns her daughters not to be deceived by the hegemonic discourse of victimology, that is, who is a victim and who is a victimizer. However, the third version, told by the grown-up Sookie, furthers Duk Hee's relativizing interpretation and radically refutes the justification of violence. When asked if she feels sorry for the hungry fox, Hyun Jin acknowledges her conditional sympathy. To this observation, the elder sister responds, shaking her head, "The people still get eaten. . . . I'm *changing the ending* before I get eaten" (278; emphasis added). Sookie's suggestion is remarkable in proposing to rewrite the narrative, rather than just relativizing a victimology that perpetuates an endless spiral of violence and revenge. Though this criticism is not fully developed in the novel, it does gesture toward a way of overcoming antagonisms in the act of questioning.

Sookie's somewhat mysterious remarks on the revision of a fictional narrative remind the reader of the fact that *Fox Girl* is narrated by Hyun Jin, who is now looking after Sookie's daughter in Hawaii. This metafictional framework that bookends the whole story bridges the gap between fiction and reality by posing the question: what does it mean to "change the ending" when it comes to the Korean War? At the beginning of the novel, Hyun Jin characterizes Sookie as her "oldest friend and truest enemy" (1), and we read the story seeking to understand what she means. Her ambivalence turns out to be rooted in Afro-Asian antagonism that she had internalized during her childhood in Korea. Hyun Jin still dreams of Sookie almost nightly—"I would like to see Sookie again," she writes, "so that I can reconcile her in my memory and banish her from my dreams" (2). Keller's 2002 novel is a testimony to the endurance of the Afro-Asian antagonism of the unending Korean War. It is difficult for Hyun Jin to imagine the end of violence because it is difficult to imagine the end of the Korean War; Sookie remains inscrutable because she dares to envision the end of it. By contrasting two differentiated Afro-Asian orphans, Keller's story renders the unending antagonism a reminder of the Forgotten War that never ends.

Afro-Asian Victimology in Toni Morrison's *Home*

Morrison's *Home* critically captures Afro-Asian antagonism after the Korean War through Frank Money, a Black veteran in the United States. His trajectory between the integrated combat zone in Korea and the still overtly segregated United States in the 1950s—a trajectory similar to that of Hyun Jin—also reveals the transnational continuity of American racial violence across the Pacific. "An integrated army is integrated misery," one character warns Frank, "You all go fight, come back, they treat you like dogs" (Morrison 2012: 18). Pointing out the "transcontinental reach of the colonial-imperial apparatus" inaugurated in Korea, Donald E. Pease (2019: 164, 160) argues that the two places depicted in Morrison's novel—Lotus, Georgia, and Chosin, Korea—are "more or less interchangeable locales" to the extent that "the reader encounters profound similarities between Korean War refugees and the black Korean War veteran Frank Money." From this transnational American studies perspective, one may articulate a possible critical ground shared by Koreans and African Americans, an Afro-Asian solidarity that emerges from the recognition of shared victimhood under the structure of transnational American

racial violence, which in itself is undoubtedly significant. Yet *Home* also gestures toward the very mechanism that aborts this solidarity, that is, Afro-Asian antagonism of the long Korean War. The novel identifies Frank's sense of guilt stemming from his own violent acts in Korea as a psychosocial basis to morally and affectively discourage him from imagining transnational, interracial kinship. As a veteran of an unjust, integrated war, he is an agent of American national violence against Korea—rather than a possible ally of color against white America's violence. Morrison's novel, a correlative of Keller's *Fox Girl*, addresses Afro-Asian antagonism stemming from the bifurcated perception of *the* Black perpetrator and *the* yellow victim, a rigid, dividing framework, which I term an *Afro-Asian victimology*, that would endure long after the 1953 armistice.

Dubbed the Forgotten War, the Korean War has attracted considerable attention from memory studies scholars over the past decade. In her influential study, Jodi Kim (2010: 5) characterizes her Asian American critique as an “unsettling hermeneutic” that “unsettles and disrupts the dominant Manichaeian lens through which the Cold War is made sense of and in turn generates meaning.” When applied to the Korean War, this critical methodology demonstrates that “every willful forgetting leaves its symptoms and traces, and to label an event a ‘Forgotten War’ paradoxically inaugurates an attempt to retrieve that which has been forgotten” (145). Referring to Kim, in contrast, Joseph Darda (2015: 86) critiques “the very rubric of remembering/forgetting” that pervades cultural memory studies because we need to understand the war “not as forgotten but as strategically remembered in American culture.” In short, American national discourse either willfully forgets (Kim) or remembers to forget (Darda) the Korean War. The conflict between these two approaches, I argue, is overcome in Morrison's novel, whose narrative uncovers multiple mnemonic layers sedimented at the bottom of a traumatized Black veteran's psyche. The complexity of his multilayered memory is a product of Cold War America's racial strategy, which results in him willingly renouncing his power to imagine Afro-Asian solidarity. I examine the dynamism of memory and oblivion captured in the novel with recourse to the following three frameworks: Asian American memory studies, trauma studies, and Afro-Asian antagonism of the long Korean War.

At the beginning of the story, having returned from Korea a year before, Frank is not in his hometown in Georgia but lingering on the Pacific Rim in Seattle, where he is detained in a psychiatric ward, “the nuthouse” (Morrison 2012: 11), sedated by morphine. To trick nurses

into skipping his injections and gain the chance to escape confinement, he imitates a state of coma by concentrating on something that would stir “no feelings” and conjure “no memory—sweet or shameful” (8–9). This incarceration of a traumatized vet who carries the memory of a desegregated military experience and its violence against Asians represents American domestic violence, which enforces oblivion. A man who helps with Frank’s “illegal” journey from Seattle to Atlanta, a kind of inverted, mid-twentieth-century version of the Underground Railroad, refers to the ambiguous and arbitrary legal ground for Frank’s detention as follows: “Interesting law, vagrancy, meaning standing outside or walking without clear purpose anywhere” (9). The peripatetic movement of Frank’s body is restricted within the state-controlled medical facility so that memories of Korea viewed from an African American perspective will not be disseminated within the mid-century United States. This first layer conforms to the formulation of Asian American memory studies that Kim exemplifies, or what Darda calls the “rubric of remembering/forgetting”: the Korean War was “forgotten” by the Cold War security state’s politico-racial legislation, while the Black vet harbors the potential criticality of secretly remembering it.

Second, as we later learn, Frank has his own reasons for not remembering the war. He laments that he was unable to keep his “home-boys,” his old friends Mike and Stuff, from dying in Korea and feels that he is “far too alive to stand before Mike’s folks or Stuff’s” (15). This instance of survivor’s guilt conforms to what Katherine Kinney (2000: 4) terms “friendly fire.” Though her account focuses on Vietnam War stories, such as Oliver Stone’s *Platoon* (1986) and Tim O’Brien’s *Going After Cacciato* (1978), the phenomenon “is not unique to Vietnam.” She observes, “the idea that we”—Americans—“fought ourselves, literalized in the repetitious image of Americans killing Americans, is . . . virtually the only story that has been told by Americans about the Vietnam War.” By erasing the existence of Asian enemies—or real victims—from their representational field, these stories characterize American soldiers as “victims of their own ideals, practices, and beliefs.” This narrative strategy, complicit with American exceptionalism, an ideology inseparable from the belief of American innocence, is shared by Frank. In explicating his reluctance to return to Georgia, he further recounts that his own “easy breath and unscathed self would be an insult to them. And whatever lie he cooked up about how bravely they died, he could not blame their resentment” (Morrison 2012: 15). During this account, he almost morally elevates himself; his “guilt” is exclusively explained by his

failure as a soldier, attributable to his lack of military competence, including bravery or masculinity. No one would blame him, though; he is one of the victims who was destined to survive, suffering from the burden of a “shameful” memory. On this layer, it is precisely through this traumatic form that the Korean War is “remembered” rather than forgotten.

Third, the novel reveals that the second layer of Frank’s memory/oblivion dynamics is a screen memory that *forgets* a more egregious, scandalous, and indeed “shameful” one. He raped and murdered a Korean girl during his military service, a total iteration of the Black violence featured in *Fox Girl*. His survivor’s guilt framework, it turns out, has “kept the Korean child hidden” (137); his “trauma” was constituted by forgetting Asian victims, and when they resurface to his consciousness, they take a sexualized and racialized form. He confides this secret only to an interlocutor, “you,” who is not just listening to but also writing down what Frank recounts, a figure analogous to Morrison, in one of the all-italicized chapters:

I have to say something to you right now. I have to tell the whole truth. I lied to you and I lied to me. I hid it from you because I hid it from me. I felt so proud grieving over my dead friends. . . . My mourning was so thick it completely covered my shame. . . .

I shot the Korean girl in her face. . . .

I am the one she aroused. . . .

How could I let her live after she took me down to a place I didn’t know was in me?

How could I like myself, even be myself if I surrendered to that place where I unzip my fly and let her taste me right then and there? . . .

You can keep on writing, but I think you ought to know what’s true.
(133–34)

This confession is an inverted depiction of the Korean recognition of Black violence. After Korea, the innermost secret that dismantles Frank’s identity is the memory of his own “shameful” perpetration. Though he became a perpetrator in Korea, “a place” he unexpectedly finds *within himself*—a place that transformed him into a rapist, murderer, and liar—is also the American homeland. He “remembers” that he, as an American soldier, has endorsed and wielded American national violence. When African Americans succeed in becoming American soldiers, they are severed from Afro-Asian linkages. In this

way Afro-Asian antagonism is formed once again, this time from the Black side. Frank is undoubtedly a perpetrator of the Korean girl; the violence, however, is no more than a symptom of American national violence, not evidence for Black subjects' proclivity to violence. While acknowledging his "shameful" deed, he explains that it is "she," a Korean girl, who "took him down to a place he didn't know was in him"—he cannot help ascribing responsibility to the Korean victim as if she were to blame, or as if either an African American or an Asian must be a perpetrator when addressing victimhood on either side. As long as his thoughts are confined within a framework in which Afro or Asia must be a perpetrator, he remains unable to address American national violence as a structural basis producing that victimology. Within this paradigm of the Afro-Asian victimology of the Korean War, Black vets are not entitled to imagine solidarity with Asians.

To undermine this Afro-Asian victimology, it is important to recognize that Frank is a perpetrator *and* victim. Yet the crucial situation that the novel conveys is not that Afro-Asian solidarity is blocked despite his endeavor but that it is *Frank* who believes that he is a shameful perpetrator. The Korean War affectively conditions him to refrain from thinking about solidarity with Asians. Morrison's story proffers a critical mnemonic mechanism of the Korean War, one that is neither willful forgetting nor remembering to forget, though it does address both. Once African Americans are interpellated and assimilated into the logic of American national violence, all they can do is to remember it as their own violence, one which they choose to leave unexcavated. Though white veterans undoubtedly held their own versions of remorse for killing people in Asia, they were able to enjoy a pseudo-minoritized and -ethnicized marketable identity as "veteran American" (McGurl 2009, Darda 2021). This racialization of veterans is why Morrison's Korean War novel focuses on the depiction of racial segregation on American soil, where the protagonist struggles to return to civilian life, dissociated from American national identity, Asian victims, and African American peers. For African Americans, to serve in Korea meant experiencing military integration and civil segregation, both identification with and disidentification from American normalcy. Frank's feeling that he is not qualified to affiliate with Asians based on transnational victimhood emerges precisely because he has lost a community to belong to, a narrative to identify with. In this sense, an African American sense of guilt needs to be differentiated from a white one. While the latter is a national lamentation, the former is an effect of American racial formation, the Afro-Asian antagonism of the long Korean War.

Frank's bifurcated victimology, constructed through rigid racial identification, can be unsettled with reference to what Judith Butler (2016: 26, 32) terms "precarity." After noting that whether one's death can be recognized as "grievable" hinges on our affective link to the lost life and that its imaginative limit is constantly regulated through the ways in which wars are mediatized, Butler argues that "precarity cuts across identity categories as well as multicultural maps, thus forming the basis for an alliance focused on opposition to state violence and its capacity to produce, exploit, and distribute precarity for the purposes of profit and territorial defense." The state of being exposed to precariousness vis-à-vis state violence—she is talking about American warfare—can be reappropriated as a basis for affiliations not demarcated by identitarian categorizations constantly produced through wars, such as Afro-Asian victimology. "Such an alliance would not require," she continues, "agreement on all questions of desire or belief or self-identification. It would be a movement sheltering certain kinds of ongoing antagonisms among its participants, valuing such persistent and animating differences as the sign and substance of a radical democratic politics." Thus, the juxtaposition of Morrison's *Home* and Butler's *Frames of War* (2009) indicates a direction in which to consider the question: what can be done once an antagonism is internalized and the affective ground for friendship is destroyed? What Butler describes is not so much to undo antagonism itself as to detour the discourse of victimology. Pease (2019: 162–63; emphasis added) concludes that "*home* disrupts and detotalizes the hegemonic cold war narrative that had monopolized understanding of the 50s . . . through the eyes of a black veteran of the Korean War who had *not* internalized cold war ideology." On the contrary, I contend that Frank has to seek an alternative narrative precisely because he *has* internalized Cold War America's totalizing ideology. *Home* is a story *after* the making of Afro-Asian victimology.

The question brings us to Frank's younger sister, Cee, whose Black body, especially her uterus, is utilized by eugenicist Dr. Beau, who employs Cee as a "maid" in Atlanta. Not unlike her brother, Cee is on the verge of death under racist medical violence sanctioned by the state. In Seattle, Frank receives mail ordering him to "Come fast. She be dead if you tarry" (Morrison 2012: 8) from Dr. Beau's cook, a Black woman; her letter encourages him to escape the ward and travel to Atlanta. Yet he actually "tarries;" as a justification for this delay, he keeps referring to the screen memory of his "homeboys" whom he was unable to save: "*I had to go but I dreaded it*" (84). Whether or not

this prevarication is true, a more profound psychological impediment that makes Frank “tarry” is that Cee would remind him of the Korean girl who, scavenging for food, conjured his childhood memory of the siblings stealing peaches together (94). Before going to Korea, Frank, despite Cee’s “sorrow” and “panic,” decided to enlist to escape their hometown, Lotus, a place that was “suffocating, killing him and his two best friends,” while assuring “himself Cee would be okay,” and it turned out “she wasn’t” (35). In his mind, the two young women of color constitute transnational, interracial victimhood—precarity—vis-à-vis American violence, and he considers himself the victimizer. But his rescue of and reunion with Cee not only leads him to confess his “shameful” memory but also brings him to a much older memory of witnessing white violence with Cee, a kind of primal scene that book-ends the narrative. While reburying an unnamed Black victim’s bones in the periphery of their hometown, Frank “remembers” his status as a victim. Thus, the conclusion of this novel seems to be that to avoid Afro-Asian victimology, shared precarity must be prioritized over both American national violence and one’s militarized racial identity.

Throughout the entirely italicized chapters, Frank repeatedly challenges the transcriber’s capacity as a fiction writer: “*Korea. / You can’t imagine it because you weren’t there. You can’t describe the bleak landscape because you never saw it*” (93). This critical gesture led several critics to acknowledge Frank’s authority to speak about Korea as a direct witness to the war as opposed to the novel’s author who “wasn’t there.” Mary Dudziak (2012), for example, characterizes the novel as “an exploration of the limits of understanding.” To paraphrase this interpretation, this metafictional framework and Morrison’s incapacity to fully imagine the Korean War, which she intentionally chose to foreground, marks an ethical self-limitation she sets on her faculties as a novelist. Referring to Frank’s PTSD, Dudziak goes on to argue that “even if broken soldiers received better care and resources, they would still confront the same emptiness—the profound limits of empathy.” Though they might find their “paths to more hopeful futures, they do so in a context of psychological isolation, not of connection.” This transcriber, however, is the only figure to which Frank can confess his “shame”; he cannot confide in his sister, given the similarity he perceives between her and the Korean girl. He can only manage to do so, paradoxically enough, in front of a person who “wasn’t there.” Toward the end, he says, “*You can keep on writing, but I think you ought to know what’s true*” (134). Whether Frank’s “true” story can be fully told hinges on the transcriber bringing his innermost “shameful” memory to a broader readership who is invited to remember the

Forgotten War. His use of the second person pronoun, “you,” also addresses the reader and prompts us to remember.

In 1992, Morrison contributed lyrics to André Previn’s song cycle *Honey and Rue* (released in 1995) at the request of the African American soprano singer Kathleen Battle, who premiered the work. *Home* bears the lyrics of the second number “Whose House Is This?” as its epigraph. Reframed as Frank’s monologue, he wonders: “Whose house is this? / . . . / It’s not mine. / I dreamed another, sweeter, brighter / . . . / This house is strange. / . . . / Say, tell me, why does its lock fit my key?” This embarrassment at the uncanniness of his own house is concretized as the discovery of “a place I didn’t know was in me,” his disillusionment and loss of innocence. Since the resurgence of American exceptionalism after 9/11 under the Bush administration, the idea of home has been recharged with conservative sentiments and reinforced by the Homeland Security Act of 2002. How can we critically locate the 2012 homecoming novel titled *Home*—with its final sentence “Let’s go home” (147) uttered by Cee—in a post-9/11 context? As Amy Kaplan (2003: 89) remarks, the logic of the homeland security state generates “a profound sense of insecurity, not only because of the threat of terrorism, but because the homeland, too, proves a fundamentally uncanny place, haunted by prior and future losses, invasions, abandonment.” Our Black Korean War vet is a haunting figure within both the Cold War and the post-9/11 homeland security state precisely because of the violence he is forced to represent, a vessel under which the United States strategically relegated the underside of its use of military force. *Home* pushes the idea of a Black vet as a medium through which American national violence is represented to its limits—if Black vets are to represent American violence, let them do so in a radical manner to implode the Afro-Asian antagonism. As an archival figure of the Forgotten War, Frank haunts the contemporary American homeland, reminding us that the Korean War’s racial violence remains rampant across the globe.

In considering Afro-Asian antagonism during the long Korean War, reading Keller’s and Morrison’s novels as a set reveals that Hyun Jin and Frank complement each other’s stories. Hyun Jin gives a voice to the muted Korean girl in *Home*, while Frank personifies the demonized Black vet in *Fox Girl*. Afro-Asia studies is essentially a cross-racial discipline that requires a comparative methodology, even when it comes to Afro-Asian divisive victimology. Juxtaposing the two novels is necessary not just because they replenish each other; it does not become quite clear until read together why both Keller and Morrison

chose to have their characters mis- or underrepresent their racial counterparts. Through the characters' delimited and deformed frame of recognition, both novels document how Afro-Asian antagonism has already been neutralized and naturalized in their everyday lives. Hyun Jin and Frank testify to how historical, social, and cultural structures define the ways in which Afro-Asian subjects feel and act, and thus how it seems impossible for them to imagine otherwise. When considering racial antagonisms through the lens of fictional narratives, what seems to be a failure or inadequacy in the text can be the core of real-life interventional efforts. Comparative reading of two works that depict opposite sides of racial antagonism can transform into a basis for solidarity. Beyond Korea, Keller's *Fox Girl* and Morrison's *Home* tell us how to read Afro-Asian war stories as counter-narratives against American war making and race making during the long Cold War.

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Notes

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- 1 At this point, "61 percent of the line infantry companies in Korea had become racially mixed" (Mershon and Schlossman 1998: 226).
- 2 Christine Hong (2012: 142) argues that it is precisely because the knowledge about the Korean War cannot be reduced to positive evidence that fictional narratives become "a potent instrument of political warfare." When it comes to the "Forgotten War," fiction becomes an archival site where something officially forgotten can be effectively remembered.
- 3 The Double V campaign culminated in the 1941 Washington march, organized by A. Philip Randolph and others, against racial discrimination in the American war industry. After the war, Randolph continued to lead the resistance by establishing the Committee against Jim Crow in Military Service and Training in 1947 and the League for Nonviolent Civil Disobedience against Military Segregation in 1948 (Taylor 2013: 17). For an early historiography of the militarization of the Black body, see Nalty 1986.
- 4 On the yellow peril and model minority discourses, see Lowe 1996; Bascara 2006; Phu 2012; Tchen and Yeats 2014; Klein 2003.

- 5 Another cultural project that contributed to promoting the idea of American humanitarian war was Operation Babylift, a mass adoption of Korean mixed-race orphans or “GI babies” to the United States, implemented by the American philanthropist Harry Holt. This was a precursor to the same Cold War enterprise Gerald Ford deployed in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. For Korea, see Moon 1997; Prébin 2013; Nelson 2016; Woo 2019; McKee 2019; Kim 2020. For Vietnam, see Eleana J. Kim 2010; Nguyen 2012; and Espiritu 2014, among others. On the idea of “humanitarian violence” in general, see Atanasoski 2013.
- 6 Documenting the 1990 Red Apple Boycott, a retail boycott campaign led by Black Nationalists and others against two Korean-owned stores in Flatbush, Brooklyn, Claire Jean Kim (2000: 2, 11) challenges the stereotypes of Afro-Asian conflict, such as the racial scapegoating narrative (frustrated African Americans venting their resentment on economically successful Koreans). It is what she terms *racial power*, that is, “the racial status quo’s systemic tendency toward self-reproduction,” which “shapes the structural setting for Black-Korean conflict.” Pitting Black people as “the pathological underclass” against Koreans “as the hardworking model minority,” racial power allows whites to remain as “neutral enforcers of colorblind justice.”
- 7 See Calvin Tafel’s (2009) useful webpage, *Where Is Fox Girl?*, which maps the novel’s locations.
- 8 In this earlier novel, a comfort woman is murdered by being “skewered from her vagina to her mouth” by the Japanese military (Keller 1997: 20–21).
- 9 On the subject of the Korean diaspora, studies by Baik (2020: 8) and Roh (2021: 20) are especially relevant to the present discussion. The former argues that “U.S. militarized occupation generates its own seeds of demise,” which she terms “diasporic excesses,” that is, “non-normative subjectivities and spaces” that can “activate cultural practices of resistance and regeneration.” The latter attempts to bring together two heretofore unlinked Korean diasporic subjects, *Zainichi* (resident Koreans in Japan) and Korean Americans, stressing how American military juridical systems in East Asia have been crucial in forming diasporic Korean subjectivities. See also Chuh and Shimakawa 2001; Cho 2008; Parreñas and Siu 2007.

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