Cooking in Other Women's Kitchens: Domestic Workers in the South, 1865–1960 (review)

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allowed themselves to be photographed. Some of the subjects were obviously encouraged to appear in their finest dress, displaying painted buckskin dresses and elaborately woven shawls and cradle board covers. The Kiowas and Comanches have long been accomplished artists and their talent is readily visible in these photographs. The collection is a wonderful window into how a white-dominated agency town with two hundred people intermingled with a nearby reservation with many thousands of Indians. The University of Oklahoma Press should be applauded for producing such a fine collection, as should the editors, Southwell and Lowett.

University of Oklahoma Gary Clayton Anderson

Cooking in Other Women's Kitchens: Domestic Workers in the South, 1865–1960. By Rebecca Sharpless. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. Pp. 304. Illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 9780807834329, $35.00 cloth.)

In *Cooking in Other Women's Kitchens*, Rebecca Sharpless chronicles the experiences of African American women who entered domestic service in southern cities and towns in the years following the end of the Civil War. It is a narrative of empowerment. Black women utilized their employment as domestic servants and cooks in particular, to manipulate, navigate, and negotiate the southern racial terrain to realize new opportunities for themselves and their families. Sharpless's work is further an exploration of black women cooks and their contributions to southern food and culture. As she asserts, "African American women profoundly shaped the foodways of the South and, hence, its overall culture" (xii).

Sharpless's work began as part of a larger study about southern women who "used cooking to push the boundaries of women's so-called spheres" (xii). What she discovered in the process was that black women's experiences varied greatly from that of white women. Black women were employed overwhelmingly in white homes, and their labor was largely shaped within this racialized context. How did black cooks traverse what at times could be an extremely beneficial and at others a contentious relationship with their white employers? Certainly, employers wielded the power to hire or fire cooks and to create tolerable or difficult work conditions.

Complicating the matter was the fact that post-Civil War expectations of black cooks often translated into current realities. These dynamics reflected southern society generally. Black women and their employers lived in the Jim Crow South. Even as their lives intertwined, race and sex largely dictated the parameters of their working relationship. Black women were marginalized throughout the South, and they perceived the world in dramatically different ways than black men and white women, who were also oppressed. But, despite the sexism that often rendered them invisible, white women often actively perpetuated the racial order. Furthermore, white employers often treated black cooks cruelly without fear of prosecution. They also created "both physical and emotional boundaries between themselves and their cooks" and expected not only obedience, but also servile behavior (134–135).

Black cooks did not always passively accept their oppression. Physical and sex-

ual violence were often the risks black cooks assumed to earn a living working in a white home. According to Sharpless, however, on some occasions and despite an infinitesimal chance of victory, they fought back. Indeed, black cooks were forced to quickly devise strategies to function and even survive in difficult work environments. Black women cooks had to be especially circumspect about protecting themselves from racialized sexual violence.

Sharpless's work also queries and refutes popular stereotypes about black cooks by seeing beyond the racist clichés of Mammy and Aunt Jemima. She argues that in books, movies, cookbooks, and advertising, these two tropes have ridiculed black women and calmed white racial anxieties for generations. Who were the women behind the streotypes? They were women for whom cooking was one of the very few opportunities available in the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century. However, they were also visionaries and participants in historical change. According to Sharpless, as domestic service waned and educational opportunities increased, black women sought other forms of employment. As the momentum of modern civil rights movement increased in the 1950s and '60s, black domestic servants also fought increasingly for their rights and dignity as American citizens.

In the final analysis, Rebecca Sharpless has produced a fine work that unearths the humanity, vulnerability, and agency of African American domestic servants. An in depth study of how black communities perceived black cooks and domestic servants might have resulted in a more nuanced analysis, but this does not take away from the astute mining of resources that have resulted in this most impressive contribution to African American, Women's, and Labor history.

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Jim Crow's Counterculture: The Blues and Black Southerners, 1890–1945. By R. A. Lawson. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010. Pp. 292. Illustrations, discography, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 9780807136805, $45.00 cloth.)

Recent scholarship on the blues has examined the genre as poetry, music, personal expression, and cultural product, to name only a few perspectives. R. A. Lawson, in *Jim Crow's Counterculture: The Blues and Black Southerners, 1890–1945*, investigates blues (lyrics mostly) as black countercultural expression. Indeed, Lawson does not claim to have written "the music's history" (ix). Rather, he traces blues culture from its emergence in the early Jim Crow South of the late nineteenth century, through the Great Migration in the early twentieth, as well as the effects that the Great Depression, New Deal programs, and two world wars had on Southern black identity. Citing representative blues lyrics along the way, Lawson highlights the transformation from an identity shaped by "bluesmen who often had been at odds with white-dominated American culture [that] gave way to a Roosevelt-era generation of pluralist musicians who regenerated the blues' countercultural impulse by leaning toward that which the Jim Crow segregationalists would deny them: a fuller identity of American citizenship" (xi).

Lawson relies heavily on secondary literature of such black music scholars as Samuel Charters, Paul Oliver, Alan Lomax, David Evans, Samuel Floyd, and Alan Govenar. His primary sources are selected blues recordings made by southern-