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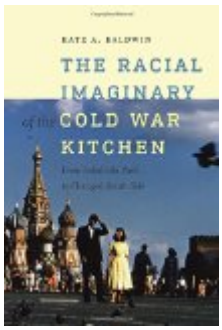

Kate A. Baldwin. *The Racial Imaginary of the Cold War Kitchen: From Sokol'niki Park to Chicago's South Side.* Hanover: Dartmouth College Press, 2016. xviii + 236 pp. $45.00, paper, ISBN 978-1-61168-863-4.

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The fairly recent marriage of US diplomatic and cultural history has been a rocky one. Although they claim different antecedents, both took current form in nineteenth-century Europe and are intently focused on issues of power, most notably who has it and how it is used. On the surface these similarities suggest the solid foundation for a happy union, yet a significant divide between the two fields was created in the latter decades of the twentieth century when a number of cultural historians embraced postmodern theory, and in particular its suggestion that there is no such thing as universal truth. This notion led traditionalists to recoil. Even those who have since found a measure of value in a "cultural turn" in diplomatic history have struggled to reconcile traditionalist and postmodernist factions in their field.

Nearly a decade ago Thomas Alan Schwatz dramatically but somewhat lightheartedly illustrated this debate. Praising new scholarship that incorporated gender and critical theory employed in the analysis of international relations, Schwartz nonetheless raised a significant question on the minds of many. "What if the cultural turn is really a huge detour," he asked, "and not one of those nice detours through beautiful scenery and picturesque small towns, but one of those nasty detours that takes you miles out of your way?"[1] Kate Baldwin's *The Racial Imaginary of the Cold War Kitchen: From Sokol'niki Park to Chicago's South Side* may help to relieve the fears of those who continue to question whether cultural studies enriches diplomatic history or pulls it off course.

If ongoing debate about the value of cultural studies is concerning news for diplomatic historians, the good news is that interest in the Cold War has continued unabated in US popular culture. Images of *Mad Men*'s Betty Draper, television wife of 1960s advertising executive Don Draper, sitting alone and lonely at the family's kitchen table suggest what Baldwin identifies as the "captivity" of white middle-class women in the "Cold War kitchen." Likewise, in the popular FX series *The Americans,* the Jennings family parents—and So-

viet spies—Philip and Elizabeth whisper national secrets across the kitchen island of their Virginia home in the waning years of the war. Here viewers will recognize Baldwin's concept of the kitchen as a room where the "evasions, oversights, and forced silence" of gender and race are seared in the imagined reality of early 1980s America (p. 23).

Baldwin uses 1959's "kitchen debate" between Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev and US vice president Richard Nixon at the American National Exhibition in Moscow (ANEM) to establish the kitchen as a cultural site. Marking a brief thaw in Cold War relations, in 1958 the United States and Soviet Union signed a cultural exchange agreement meant in part to share new technological advances. That same year the Soviets hosted an exhibition in New York celebrating their superior achievements in science by prominently featuring Sputnik, the Soviet satellite that would launch a decades-long Cold War "space race." By contrast, the following year in Moscow the Americans focused on promoting technological advances in a dazzling array of consumer goods available to its citizens. Closely watched by journalists, Nixon and Khrushchev together toured the ANEM exhibition, at one point stopping at the display of a modern US kitchen. In the exchange that ensued, "Nixon's promotion of the kitchen" made it "representative of freedom and democracy," by demonstrating the liberation of American women from household drudgery (p. 10). His attempts to impress Khrushchev, however, were easily dismissed by the premier, who questioned why women, the purported users of state-of-the art kitchen technology, were missing from the display. It is this significant absence of gender and the equally unsettling elision of race in Cold War histories that Baldwin interrogates in her study.

Mapping the kitchen as cultural space offers Baldwin unique opportunity for analyzing intersections of cultural and diplomatic history in the Cold War context; as a result she produces a counternarrative that challenges a binary logic still associated with this history, bringing a fresh eye to literature and film of the era. Here she demonstrates how "major ideas and tropes percolating in the Cold War kitchen" migrated to fill new cultural spaces (p. 130). American poet and novelist Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963), playwright Alice Childress's *Like One of the Family* (1956), and Russian novelist Natalya Baranskaya's *A Week Like Any Other* (1969) are among the literary works examined by Baldwin, as is the US film *Silk Stockings* (1957). In her analysis of each, Baldwin lingers in the gray areas of the ***imagined*** realities of US and Russian culture and politics, probing how cultural understandings—and misunderstandings—are shaped by and in turn inform international relations.

Baldwin's examination of the concept of "diversity" is particularly effective in developing her counternarrative. This is true when she argues that by conflating diverse consumer options with liberation and democracy, as Nixon did in Moscow, US Cold War leaders tried to sell consumerism as a pathway to freedom. Indeed, the author reminds us that, "fictions of commodities as liberating and of universal womanhood" are faulty because they are created by "the occlusions of minority voices and diverse ways of being" (p. 179). Baldwin makes a strong argument for how these minority voices are in fact "linked by their status as unnamed but crucial links to the maintenance of Cold War ideology" (p. 73).

As her focus on literary and film culture suggests, Baldwin is not a diplomatic historian but rather an American studies scholar working on international relations in the Cold War period. Along with considerable strengths there are some leaps in Baldwin's analysis that not all readers, diplomatic historians in particular, may be willing to take with her. For example, on a number of occasions she misses opportunities to challenge the hegemony of an established postwar narrative de-

picting the captivity of middle-class white women as near totalizing. In the last two decades, studies examining social and political activism of women who pushed back against what Betty Friedan described as the "feminine mystique" have added much-needed nuance to this history.[2] There is also a hint of presentism in her suggestion that "Soviets would never tire of reminding the United States how race and gender are always part of the ideological construction of US citizenship, or about the ways in which a racial articulation always underlies the construction of the universality of the abstract individual as reprensentatively male" (p. 64). I found myself needing more persuading to believe that Soviets had embraced theories of intersectionality decades before scholars such as Kimberly Crenshaw began to fully develop the concept.

These slight leaps are minor points in this otherwise well-argued and engaging study. Indeed, those willing to go along for the ride will find plenty of "those nice detours through beautiful scenery" to be convinced that Baldwin has demonstrated significant ways to nudge the field of diplomatic history toward new and exciting directions.

Notes

[1]. Thomas Alan Schwartz, "Explaining the Cultural Turn—or Detour?", *Diplomatic History* 31, no. 1 (2007): 146.

[2]. See for example Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Helen Laville, *Cold War Women: The International Activities of American Women's Organisations* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2002); and Jacqueline Castledine, *Cold War Progressives: Women's Interracial Organizing for Peace and Freedom* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012).

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