

“Hear the Table Call of the South:” White Supremacist Rhetoric and the 1950 *Charleston Receipts* Junior League Cookbook

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Abstract: *Charleston Receipts*, “the oldest Junior League Cookbook still in print,” offers an opportunity to further consider the rhetorical work of cookbooks when circulated outside the home. Originally compiled in 1950 as a fund-raising project, *Charleston Receipts* is a common type of cookbook for American women’s organizations. However, since it was penned by upper-crust Junior League Club members, *Charleston Receipts* circulates elite white narratives about race and class relations in the mid-century south in addition to its recipes for Plantation Punch and Cooter Soup.

Keywords: *Charleston Receipts*, *Junior League*, *White Supremacist Rhetoric*, *Race and Class Relations*

“ ‘...gal fetch um big plate pile’ up wid baddle cake. Him pit two-t’ree ‘pun ‘e plate en’ kibbuhr’um wid muhlassis, en’ staa’t fuh eat’

The muffins and rolls melt in your mouth;

The waffles and biscuits hit the spot.

Oh, hear the table call of the South:

‘Take Two! And butter them while they’re hot!’”

—Epigraph to the “Hot Breads” section of *Charleston Receipts*: “America’s Oldest Junior League Cookbook in Print” (191)

The epigraph to the breads section of the 1950 Junior League cookbook, *Charleston Receipts*, paints a tantalizing portrait of the southern table piled high with a bounty of breads, butter, and molasses. Functionally, the epigraph serves to introduce the bread recipes that follow, but rhetorically, it also welcomes the reader into a fantasy of southern hospitality: we hear the “table call of the south” inviting us to dig in to heaping helpings of hot, delectable

southern specialties like batter cakes¹ and biscuits, and we are invited to experience regional food customs associated with the south, drowning food in butter or soaking pancakes in sticky-sweet molasses.

However, this vision of southern hospitality also appears not-so-hospitable when one considers the clear distinctions the epigraph draws between those who prepare and serve the food and those who eat it, between those who speak an oral dialect represented in printed text as nearly incomprehensible, and those who speak English in the crisp, clear, and correctly spelled rhyming lines that follow.

While cookbooks are clearly rhetorical in that they function as a type of technical writing (a subfield of rhetoric that includes the genre of instructions), cookbooks perform rhetorical work beyond that of simple instruction manuals. Like other kinds of women's vernacular texts that have been reclaimed by feminist historians of rhetoric – diaries, scrapbooks, photo albums, and the like – cookbooks convey messages and values to their audiences in addition to descriptions of cooking methods and lists of ingredients and measurements. Cookbooks encode information about how their compilers see the world and their places in it and how they value particular cultural and economic habits around the production, preparation, and consumption of food. Cookbooks offer readers an idealized vision of the local community in which they are compiled, and they carry messages to readers about the status of the women who compile them and their relationships to those around them. It is this rhetorical function of cookbooks that interests scholars of women's rhetoric (as well as scholars in food studies, cultural studies, history, and women's studies) as it offers us opportunities to reaffirm the presence of women's rhetorical activities even in historical periods when women's rhetorical performances in the public sphere were discouraged, devalued, or diminished.

Recent studies position cookbooks as sites in which women's resistance to gendered codes of behavior and communication can be read. For example, in her article "A Recipe for Remembrance," Rosalyn Collings Eves argues that "female domestic traditions – such as recipe sharing – provide a space for vernacular and countercultural memory to flourish" (282). Likewise, Isaac West, in his examination of pacifist cookbooks during Vietnam, describes them as important "sites of identity formation and resistance" (379). Rhetorical scholars studying cookbooks have emphasized that the private space of the home and the humble genre of the cookbook allows the construction of what Elizabeth Fleitz describes as a "vital life-affirming community" (2). Many of these studies

1 Batter cakes may refer to pancakes, or even more likely, hoe cakes/johnny cakes, a type of cornmeal pancakes popular in many regions of the south that were often served with molasses.

wish to redeem the work of cookbook compliers and thus focus on the most positive aims of that rhetorical enterprise.

However, reclaiming women's rhetoric in this way can also overlook the negative ends everyday rhetorics can serve. In her recent article, "Community Cookbooks: Sponsors of Literacy and Community Identity," Lisa Mastrangelo offers this more neutral description: community cookbooks "create a snapshot of their communities, a picture and reflection of who they are and who they want people to think they might be" (74). Mastrangelo's definition opens up a space to consider what happens when a cookbook "creates a snapshot" of a community steeped in racist ideology. Thus, we might ask, what happens when cookbooks construct communities or affirm identities that depend upon the subjection of others? Furthermore, what happens when a community cookbook leaves the privacy of the domestic space, carrying its ideologically loaded message into a wider public? In *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century*, food studies scholar Kyla Wazana Tompkins explains that "kitchens...are not only sites of utopic possibility, of the possible inversion of classes of people, and of the worlding dreams of early feminism, although they are all that: they are also dystopic spaces whose abjection in the internal economy of the home allows the repressed to be represented in the visceral commonplaces of kitchen work" (10). Though Tompkins' work explores eating culture in the 19th century in the U.S., her description of the kitchen can easily be applied to cookbooks like *Charleston Receipts* in the 20th century. Although some cookbooks might perform liberatory rhetorical work, *Charleston Receipts*, "America's Oldest Junior League Cookbook in Print," published in 1950 by the Junior League of Charleston, SC, offers an opportunity to further consider the rhetorical work of cookbooks especially when circulated outside the home, to consider how cookbooks might operate not only as tools of liberation or resistance, but as white supremacist propaganda.

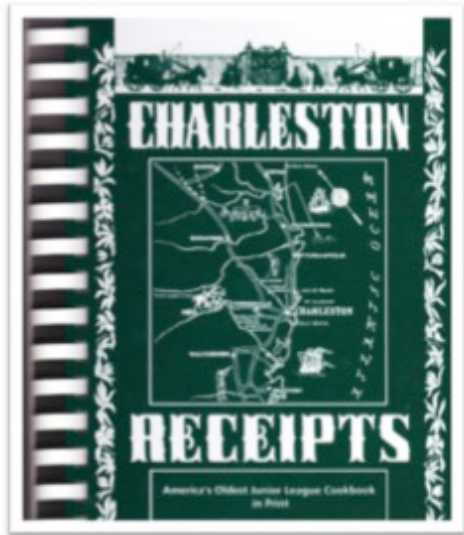
Community Cookbooks and Charitable Causes

Originally compiled in 1950 as a fund-raising project, *Charleston Receipts* represents a common type of cookbook for American women's organizations. As several scholars note, the community cookbook has its roots in women's organizations during the Civil War when communally compiled cookbooks were first used to raise funds for soldiers' families (see Ireland, Kelly, Ferguson). As women's organizations flourished in the latter half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, more and more women's groups employed the fundraising mechanism of the community cookbook, which also had the public relations benefit of publicizing the groups' missions and efforts in their communities.

Thus, when the Junior League of Charleston, SC first compiled their cookbook in 1950, they were engaging in a very typical type of fundraising effort for women's groups of the time, and they likely could not have foreseen how far their work would travel. According to the Charleston Junior League's own website, the cookbook had been printed nearly 800,000 times by 2004, and their website claims the cookbook is in its 32nd printing. However, my own copy, gifted to me in 2007, was published in the 33rd printing, a print run of 15,000 more copies. Though I have been unable to find information about just how many printings there have been since 2007, it is likely that the number the Junior League reports on their website is now much higher.

The current Junior League website reports that the sale of the cookbook has brought in over 1 million dollars over the last 65 years, money which was used to benefit the local community. The original purpose of the cookbook was to fund the Charleston Speech and Hearing Center, for which the Junior League of Charleston was given an award by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association in 1991. The sale of the cookbook has funded a considerable number of charitable and civic causes over the last 65 years including children-at-risk and teen outreach programs, educational programs bringing art and music to local schools, and support for local hospice and soup kitchens. The cookbook itself includes a list of 40 different causes that cookbook sales have supported (6).

Charleston Receipts has been reviewed in major publications such as *Southern Living Magazine*, the *New York Tribune*, and *The Ladies Home Journal*. According to their website, when Queen Elizabeth II visited Charleston in 1957, the Charleston Junior League prepared cooter² soup for her and presented her with a copy of the cookbook. *Charleston Receipts* and its 1986 sequel,



Charleston Receipts Repeats, were both inducted into the Walter S. McIlhenny Community Cookbooks Hall of Fame.³

On one level then, the cookbook appears to fulfill its role in the Junior League's mission, to promote voluntarism and improve communities through the service of its members. However, since it was penned by mid-century, upper-crust Junior League members, this particular cookbook reveals interesting racial and class narratives through descriptions of "family" recipes, which, in some cases, are recipes belonging to and prepared by their African-American cooks. *Charleston Receipts* circulates elite white narratives about race and class relations in the mid-century south in addition to its recipes for plantation punch and cooter soup.

Setting the Table and Setting the Scene

Many of the recipes in *Charleston Receipts* paint a privileged and elegant social setting for a meal, such as "Cotillion Club Punch," "Plantation Plum Pudding," and "Magnolia Gardens' Pancake Cookies" (15, 225, 300). Recipes refer to elite social events, such as dances large enough to necessitate recipes serving 300 people, or weddings where the cake must feed so many people that one recipe calls for 20 pounds each of butter, flour, and sugar (284).

This last recipe, "Carolina Housewife Wedding Cake of 1850"⁴ is provided by Mary Deas Ravenel, a representative of a prominent Charleston family whose name will be instantly recognizable to residents and visitors to the Lowcountry, as the Ravenel Bridge, a 2.5 mile suspension bridge, is one of the

3 The Walter S. McIlhenny Community Cookbooks Hall of Fame is sponsored by the McIlhenny Company which is the maker of Tabasco brand products. The award's name has since been changed to the Tabasco Community Cookbook Awards. Community cookbooks that have sold over 100,000 copies are eligible for consideration for the award. Winning cookbooks are archived for journalists and historians to research how cookbooks "play an integral role in preserving regional culinary history and traditions" ("Tabasco Community Cookbooks").

4 The recipe is probably a reference to, and perhaps a recipe from, an earlier cookbook penned by another upper-crust *Charleston woman*: *The Carolina Housewife or House and Home: By a Lady of Charleston*. Authorship is usually attributed to Sarah Rutledge, a daughter of one of the signers of The Declaration of Independence.

popular sights for Charleston tourists.⁵ Most of the recipes in the book are penned by women like Ravenel, members of the powerful and elite families of Charleston for whom many local bridges, streets, museums, and plantations are named. Like most chapters of the Junior League, the women of Charleston's Junior League were chosen from the *crème de la crème* of Charleston society; women had to be nominated by two current members before being considered for membership, ensuring that only the "right" kind of women were inducted into the organization. Not surprisingly, the cookbook reflects the social scene within which these elite southern women lived.

The images in the cookbook reinforce the privileged social scene of the Junior Leaguers, the early image of the Brewton house in particular. The Miles Brewton House, a stunning example of 18th century Georgian architecture, is now a historic site on the national register (Dillon). At the rear of the house, the



period kitchen and slave quarters have been preserved and are viewable by visitors. However, the image in the book does not present a view of the kitchen, presumably the location of the actual cooking done for the family in the Brewton house. Instead, the engraving presents the view of the house from the street, which is certainly its most beautiful angle. In front of the house, there are three figures who appear to be dressed in 18th century clothing. The

5 The Ravenel for whom the bridge is named, Arthur Jr., was a prominent politician in South Carolina. Mary Deas and Arthur Jr. share the same great-great grandfather, Daniel Ravenel (b. 1762). Reality TV aficionados may also recognize the Ravenel name from Bravo's reality TV series *Southern Charm*, which follows the lives of southern socialites, including Thomas Ravenel, Arthur Jr.'s son, a politician later convicted for cocaine possession. The Ravenel family is a very old and prolific French Huguenot family that settled in the Lowcountry in the 1680s. As prominent plantation owners, the Ravenels intermingled with other elite plantation families, and many of the Junior League members in the cookbook descend from these interwoven familial relationships.

woman wears a bonnet, an ornate ruffled jacket, and wide skirts, while the men wear powdered wigs, hose, and tailed jackets. The three figures stand conversing in front of the Brewton house, as if meeting by chance on a Sunday afternoon walk (11). In other words, the image is seen from the point of view of white visitors, which mirrors the point of view of the cookbook's creators, the privileged white women of the Junior League.

Similarly, an image of the wrought iron gates for which Charleston is famous is taken from the point of view of owners, guests, or tourists who approach from the front. About half of the images in the cookbook depict famous tourist sites in Charleston such as picturesque historic (white) churches like St. Phillips and pictures of plantations such as Middleton Place, historic sites that tourists can still visit today. Most of these images do not feature any people; the image of the Brewton House is an exception to the general trend for this type of image in *Charleston Receipts*. Perhaps the imagined reader of the cookbook is assumed to be able to visualize herself in those locations, and therefore did not need a representation of her presence. We might also explain the presence of this type of image as simply a convention of the genre. As Allison Kelly explains, "illustrations in these books are usually very limited; there is often one picture of the church, hospital, or school, and occasionally, a pastor" (35).

However, *Charleston Receipts* is generously sprinkled with images, and it is the other half of the images that are most interesting and perhaps most unique to Charleston Receipts. These images do prominently feature people, though not the actual Junior Leaguers as we might expect. Instead, 6 of 14 full-page images in the book focus on figures of African-Americans, all of whom are performing some kind of labor: images depict African-Americans selling flowers and produce at the market, shrimping, working a field of produce, or harvesting rice. As well, at the top of every page are tiny black and white silhouettes of women; the aprons are white, while the rest of figure is in black silhouette. A generous



reading might interpret the images as generic women, preparing food, carrying food, and serving it on trays, but the white aprons suggest servancy. At worst, the images seem reminiscent of mammy images famously featured on consumer products of the time.

These images reinforce a racial hierarchy, as not a single image featuring a black person shows them outside the context of labor and servitude. In the context of a cookbook's purpose, these images focus on the black labor of producing food for white consumption. Perhaps the last image in the book most directly references the race and class hierarchy established by the book's creators. The image titled "Phoebe Passes My Gate," credited to Charleston Renaissance painter⁶ Alfred Hutty, pictures a black woman carrying an enormous basket of flowers on her head, her lower lip pushed out, and her arms dangling at her sides. On the left side of the image, a black cat bristles at her approach, its back arched high in the air. Behind the woman is a brick wall with a scrolled ironwork gate, presumably owned by the person observing the scene as suggested by the title. The gates are closed to the black flower seller as she passes by (341). As viewers, we are invited to visually identify with the white owner of the gates in the scene, as we see Phoebe through his eyes. Phoebe is shut out of the domain of the white owner, and the cat's reaction emphasizes her outsider status.

Drawing Dialectical Distinctions

Charleston Receipts also uses language to draw dividing lines between the privileged members of the Junior League and the Gullah-speaking people who worked in their kitchens. Gullah people are descendants of enslaved West Africans throughout South Carolina and Georgia who developed a distinctive creole language. The cookbook uses a number of purported Gullah lines written in a dialectical representation to introduce recipes or sections. The dialect lines are not credited to any particular Gullah speaker in the volume itself. However, inside the front cover, we learn that the Gullah lines and the poetic

6 The Charleston Renaissance refers to a boom in art and writing that occurred in Charleston between the world wars, a movement credited with increasing tourism in Charleston. The cookbook contains images from several prominent (white) artists, including Hutty, Alice Ravenel Huger Smith and Elizabeth O'Neill Verner, who all became known for their representation of daily life and landscapes of Charleston. While not all artists belonging to the Charleston Renaissance were white, it does strike me as interesting that the white artists included in the cookbook are famous for depicting Charleston in a way that encouraged tourists to visit charming, historic Charleston, which ultimately formed the consumer base for *Charleston Receipts*.

verses that accompany them were written by two Junior League members, Mary Deas Ravenel and Louise Frierson Kerr. In other words, the lines are written by white women who put their words in the mouth of some imagined Gullah speaker.

Many of the lines in Gullah dialect appear to give helpful advice about cooking, as in this example drawn from the recipe for she-crab soup, a local specialty dish, in which the nameless Gullah cook advises the use of the freshest crab possible or the soup isn't worth making: "...Crab got tuh walk een duh pot demself or dey ain' wut" (45).

However, in many cases the dialect is paired with a non-Gullah poem which reveals the ways the Junior Leaguers may have seen these charming sayings. For example, in the canapé section, the invisible Gullah speaker laments that young women these days can't be content with time-tested recipes, but must always have something new to serve guests:

Young married 'ooman een dis dey she nebbuh sattify wid ole time dish;
dey always want fuh mek some kine ob new mixture.

The guests arrive at cocktail time.
On tempting trays, my board displays
Delectable varieties
Of canapés. I yearn for praise
But none comes forth. My busy guests
They talk and laugh and gaily quaff
And stretch unseeing hands to take
My handicraft as though 'twere chaff! (29)

In the poem that follows the Gullah lines, the speaker is presumably one of these white mistresses who "yearns for praise" for her "delectable canapés" while her guests gobble them up. The relationship seems clear: The black cook invents and makes the canapés for which the white hostess takes the credit.

Similarly, in the section on cakes, our anonymous Gullah cook explains how she doesn't use standard measurements when cooking, but uses her own "repinion" to judge measurements:

No, Ma'am, I ain' fuh measure. I jes' jedge by my own repinion. I teck mu flour en' muh brown sugah, en' two-t'ree glub un muhlassis." "What do you mean by glub?" You know de soun' muhlassis meck w'en 'e come from de jug? Glub! Glub! (275)

The end of the section seems to poke fun at her as she explains that she measures molasses quantities by the number of "glub glub" sounds the mixture makes when coming out of the bottle. This little bit of humor is paired with a poem written from the perspective of a white cook who weighs and measures meticulously but whose cake turns out heavy until her cook, "old Maria," corrects it (275). While this seems complimentary to the know-how of the black cook, it is revealing as the white woman then declares the black cook's method a "grave mistake." Also, the appearance of intuitive knowledge of cooking is also somewhat uncomfortable in a cookbook, a genre which relies on exact weights and measures as its method for cooking. In *Cooking in Other Women's Kitchens: Domestic Workers in the South, 1865-1960*, Rebecca Sharpless explains that is a common southern cookbook "trope, in which the supposedly exotic, 'other' African-American women cooked by innate ability and the supposedly more intelligent, rational white woman empiricized her work" (xxiii).

In this way, the Gullah lines are not so much instructions for cooking, but tidbits of local color, thus invalidating the cooking methods passed down from black cook to black cook. Furthermore, this example shows how the dialectical sections reinforce the underlying narrative in the cookbook about relative class privilege: the white woman can cook for fun and can afford to make mistakes that her black cook Maria must then correct. In his history of southern food, John Egerton explains this phenomenon as a persistent stereotype of black women chefs, who "could work culinary miracles day in and day out, but couldn't explain to anyone how they did it... their speech, humorously conveyed in demeaning dialect in many an old cookbook, came across as illiterate folk knowledge...not to be taken seriously" (qtd. in Zafar 449).

The *Charleston Receipts* cookbook has been reprinted faithfully with few changes for most of its history, with one important exception. In 1989, a white, self-taught Gullah instructor at the local College of Charleston added an explanatory note about Gullah language, history, and culture. In the note, Virginia Mixson Geraty praises the women of the Junior League for "recording and documenting a fascinating part of America's heritage" (5). She says, "The Gullah lines allow readers to meet these special people, share their humor and 'hear' their language" (5). Of course, a savvy reader might wonder just whose voice we are hearing, as the Gullah lines in the cookbook are credited to two white women. Geraty herself once penned a cookbook in which she produced southern recipes in the Gullah voice of a childhood cook she remembered

fondly.⁷ Furthermore, the Gullah dialect is here preserved within a narrative of dominance – Gullah speakers are only presented in relation to the wealthy, privileged, presumably correct-speaking women of the Junior League. This relationship is reinforced by a set of translations of the Gullah lines in “Standard English” which appear at the end of the cookbook (375).

While Geraty is well-intentioned in trying to preserve and share a language which she says is in danger of “language death,” it is hard not to think about the problematic literary and anthropological tradition of white transcription of black dialects, whose purpose was sometimes more about inscribing a race or class distinction than it was about realism. For example, the practice of “re-spell[ing] the speech of non-white or other stigmatized groups, even though the speech of dominant groups might be just as distinctive” is quite visible in the cookbook, as Ravenel and Kerr use many such misspellings of common words for black speech that even southern elites would certainly not have pronounced as they are spelled (Johnson and Chastain 180). White speech thus is represented in the cookbook as “standard” English with conventional spelling, while black speech is full of misspelled indicators of dialectical, racial difference. As Michelle Birnbaum points out in her study of late nineteenth-century literary dialect, white transcription of black speech often functioned as a “kind of blackface” that served to reassure anxious white readers of the hierarchical inferiority of blacks in the wake of massive social change brought on by Reconstruction (43). The cookbook, published in 1950 on the cusp of the major events of the Civil Rights movement, just two years after Dixiecrats walked away from the Democratic party to preserve their right to legislate racial segregation, likely represents a similar white reaction to impending social change; thus the dialectical differences serve to reassure white readers of their privileged place in the social hierarchy.

Slave Foods and Kitchen Labor

Beyond the images and the introductory material, the recipes themselves tell us much about the relationship between the women of the Junior League and the Gullah-speaking cooks who may have worked in their kitchens. In “The Signifying Dish: Autobiography and History in Two Black Women’s Cookbooks,” Rafia Zafar notes that “many of the distinctive flavors of southern food testify to the mixed cultural heritage of slave kitchens...hot red peppers, and sauces made with smoked meats stem from Africa, slaves learned to make gumbo

7 The cookbook, published in 1992, was called *Bittle en’ T’ing: Gullah Cooking With Maum Chrish’*. Geraty was locally considered an expert on Gullah, wrote several other books, and was awarded an honorary doctorate by The College of Charleston.

from Indian neighbors" (283). She goes on to explain that even recipes of European origin might be altered with the spices and tastes familiar to the black cook, thus recipes will be inflected with African influences. Likewise, she points out that "other traditional menus witness the exigencies of slavery more clearly: Hoppin' John, or rice and black-eyed peas seasoned with peppers, is a common New Year's dish believed to be a "dish that sustained slaves during the infamous middle passage" (283).

Charleston Receipts includes a number of such dishes, including five different recipes for gumbo, two for Hoppin' John, and four recipes for benne (sesame) wafers, a local delicacy, about which the cookbook helpfully explains: "according to legends among negro slaves along the coast of Charleston, benne is a good luck plant for those who eat thereof or plant in their gardens. It was originally brought in by the slaves from West Africa to this coastal region" (292). In this case, at least, the women of the Junior League acknowledge that this particular recipe is appropriated from slavery, but many of the recipes do not come with such a headnote, nor do the editors of the cookbook seem aware of the politics of such an appropriation.

There are also numerous recipes associated with specific plantations, where, as we know, dishes were not prepared by the white owners but by their black cooks. We can imagine kitchen slaves preparing and serving "New Cut Plantation Gumbo," "Mulberry Planation Lemon Cream Meringue," "Cotton Hall Plantation Eggnog," or "Hampton Plantation Shrimp Pilau." Pilau (or pilaf) a common dish in the Middle East, India, Africa and the Caribbean, was likely imported with the slaves who cooked on plantations. In fact, the sheer number of rice recipes in *Charleston Receipts* testifies to the importance of rice to the region and indirectly calls our attention to the production of rice, once the major cash crop of the Lowcountry region of South Carolina. Rice was a very labor-intensive crop that was not easily produced after slavery was abolished. The kind of rice grown in the region, and consequently referred to in many recipes in the book, is Carolina Gold rice, a strain imported along with West Africans who had been growing rice thousands of years before the colonies began importing slaves (Roach). Therefore, not only did West African slaves perform the labor of growing the rice on plantations, they also contributed their deep knowledge about rice production and their technological know-how. In other words, the presence of so many rice recipes is directly the result of the importation and enslavement of the West Africans whose descendants would later work in the kitchens of many of the privileged women in the Junior League.

This is not to say that that the women of the Junior League never cooked or contributed recipes of their own. After all, there are quite a few recipes that were clearly prepared by the recipe writer herself. As Jessamyn Neuhaus

explains in "The Way to a Man's Heart: Gender Roles, Domestic Ideology, and Cookbooks in the 1950s," mid-century cookbooks "reflected a cultural need to reaffirm women's traditional roles" in a time when those roles were being questioned (532). Cookbooks represented a normative discourse that insisted that women's worth and marriageability depended in part upon her ability to cook for a husband, a social expectation that even privileged women weren't entirely excused from. Neuhaus points out that "the dominant discourse [of cookbooks] positioned cooking and food preparation as a natural, deeply fulfilling activity for all women" (547).

However, even in some of the recipes, we can see how the privileged position of the Junior League members allows them to escape some of the more laborious parts of cooking. For example, in the recipe for "Mrs. Alston Pringle's Mock Terrapin Soup," the headnote says "Mrs. Alston Pringle's reputation as a fine cook was so well-established that it is still spoken of almost reverentially. In fact, a black cook who worked in her household once remarked 'When she puts in de buttah, ah turns ma back'" (54). As this note makes clear, Mrs. Pringle cooked when she chose to; her black cook presumably cooked most everyday meals. Similarly, a recipe for "Otranto Pine Bark Stew" instructs the reader to order their "Patsie" to make a fire of pine bark and slice pounds of potatoes and onions, thus showing how the labor of the kitchen was distributed (93). The name Patsie is set off by quotation marks in the text, suggesting a generic name for a servant of some kind, though where that specific name comes from is not clear.⁸ In her history of southern domestic labor, Rebecca Sharpless observes that cooking was seen as a "job in which the elite remain pure and above the mess, delegating the work to those under them" (2).

While black cooks are sometimes mentioned by name in the cookbook, the way they are mentioned is telling. For example, Geraty's note added in 1989 points out that "special dishes like Champagne Punch, James Island Shrimp Pie and Dah's Browning⁹ were generally prepared and served by Lowcountry cooks and butlers" (5). However, only one of these three recipes even mentions the black cook, the recipe for Dah's Browning, which has this note: "Dah is a colloquial expression for a colored nursemaid, who, in this case, was Fields Parker" (128). Interestingly, this is one of the few recipes to name an actual black cook, but notice that the recipe is not called "Field Parker's Browning;"

8 Interestingly, this very recipe is included in a 2011 *Fox News* article "Good Eats with *Charleston Receipts*" which praises the cookbook, but conveniently leaves out the reference to "Patsie" (Ferretti).

9 Browning is a preparation of caramelized sugar used as a base for making gravy.

instead her identity is reduced to the servile position she holds relative to the white woman who contributed this recipe to the cookbook.

Southern History and White Nostalgia

Beyond offering recipes, community cookbooks also define a group's vision of their place in a historical narrative. As Allison Kelly argues, community cookbooks establish for women's groups their "own version of a shared past and a defined sense of place" (38). Likewise, Lisa Mastrangelo observes in her study of two community cookbooks that they include famous or important figures to show how the cookbook's creators "define themselves as part of a larger, national community at the same time that they celebrate their own small towns" (77). The women of the Charleston Junior League follow a similar pattern, including recipes attached to prominent political figures from Charleston as a way to establish their connection to locally and nationally distinguished Charlestonians, but with some disturbing implications. One recipe in particular, "John C. Calhoun's Lobster Newberg" memorializes an antebellum senator from South Carolina who is famous for his position on states' rights and nullification, ideas which eventually led to the Civil War. (However, Calhoun himself did not live long enough to see his ideas brought to fruition having died in 1850). Calhoun is also famous for his extreme defense of slavery as a positive moral good, captured in a well-known speech to congress in 1837. Calhoun is a major part of Charleston's memorial landscape: Calhoun Street runs past a historic square that is dominated by a statue of him raised on an 115-foot column.¹⁰ Charleston's homage to Calhoun is not just about celebrating a local celebrity. Instead, as Maurie McInnis shows in *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, the city's desire to pay tribute to Calhoun in statues and street names was less about the man himself, and more about "commemoration of the 'Lost Cause' in the city [which has] forever connected the memory of the city with the politics of Calhoun, States' rights, proslavery, and ultimately, secession" (McInnis 159).

Coupled with the white supremacy that pervades the rest of the cookbook, the tribute to Calhoun gathers greater ideological purpose, a purpose which is solidified by the poem that opens the cookbook and thus sets the tone for the rest of the book:

There was a time when folks had cooks

Who never did depend on books

10 Memorializing and celebrating Calhoun is not limited to Charleston, however, as Southern states have numerous references to Calhoun in city, street, and county names, as well as schools, parks, and even one navy submarine, the USS John C. Calhoun.

To learn the art of cooking...
But times have changed, for worse we fear,
Housewives handle the kitchen ware
And must learn how to cook (7).

The poem captures a disturbing nostalgia – a longing for some idealized white vision of the past. The poem, as well as the rest of the cookbook, downplays the historical fact that the presence of those Gullah cooks, the foods they grew and prepared, their language, and most importantly, their economic and social relationships to the women of the Junior League were all products of slavery.

Domestic Texts in the Public Sphere: Contexts of Distribution

It is probably not surprising that an elite white women's organization in the 1950s south might exhibit racist tendencies; after all, the women who penned this book did so before desegregation and before the major events of the Civil Rights movement. Furthermore, the women who run the Junior League today have worked hard to change their image, citing values of inclusion and diversity on their website. One might wonder, then, why a humble artifact like this cookbook is worth examining. From a purely historical and rhetorical perspective, artifacts like *Charleston Receipts* are an important part of the story about women's rhetoric, which, as a field of study, has tended to celebrate women who supported causes modern audiences find palatable. As Carol Mattingly points out in her study of temperance rhetoric, *Well-Tempered Women*, feminist scholars may overlook groups whose agendas don't match our own ideals (1). Thus, we need to reevaluate the rhetorical functions of feminine domestic texts like cookbooks, as they do not always function to resist dominant ideologies, to express countercultural values, or to build "life affirming communities." To have a complete picture of how women used cookbooks rhetorically, we need to examine how women like the members of the Junior League used communal texts to define themselves in relation to others, to exclude people from their community as well as to include.

More importantly though, humble artifacts like this cookbook do more than just carry historical information forward to the present, particularly when they are distributed as publicly and as widely as *Charleston Receipts*. *Charleston Receipts* is sold all over Charleston in tourist shops and historic attractions such as the official shop of the Historic Charleston Foundation, the historic market, in museum gift shops, and on plantation tours. The book is marketed as a little piece of history tourists can take home with them to memorialize

their trip to quaint and charming Charleston. Part of the problem is that the cookbook doesn't come with much of the historical information that would help visitors place it in its proper historical context, and thus, the cookbook may leave readers with the "moonlight and magnolias" view of the south, a depiction which often includes a benign view of slavery and its effects on the culture and economy of the south that seems to be the theme for so many southern tourist attractions. In *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South*, Tara McPherson explains that Americans have a kind of "cultural schizophrenia about the South...in many ways Americans can't seem to get enough of the horrors of slavery, and yet we remain unable to connect this past to the romanticized history of the plantation" (3).

Many tourist attractions in Charleston embody the schizophrenia McPherson describes. For example, one of the major places the cookbook is sold in quantity is the historical market, a popular tourist attraction in Charleston, where one can buy typical tourist memorabilia such as T-shirts and bumper stickers, as well as local foods and handicrafts like benne wafers and hand-woven sweet grass baskets¹¹. Near a stall selling *Charleston Receipts* is a vendor who sells topsy-turvy dolls, a type of doll dating from the plantation era. A recent article in *The Atlantic* describes them this way: "The doll is two-headed and two-bodied—one black body and one white, conjoined at the lower waist where the hips and legs would ordinarily be. The lining of one's dress is the outside of the other's, so that the skirt flips over to conceal one body when the other is upright. Two dolls in one, yet only one can be played with at a time" (Jarboe). It should be noted that the black doll beneath the white doll's skirts is usually represented as the stereotypical mammy. In some ways, the topsy-turvy doll serves as a visual counterpart to *Charleston Receipts*, visually illustrating the relationship between the members the Junior League and the Gullah women who worked in their kitchens.

At the head of Charleston's historic market where the cookbook is sold stands Market Hall, a masterpiece of Greek revival architecture, in which The United Daughters of the Confederacy currently operates a museum celebrating confederate soldiers. The confederate museum sentimentalizes Nathan Bedford Forrest, founder of the KKK, and downplays the horrors of slavery, a common feature of pro-confederacy memorialization throughout the south. As James Loewen explains in *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong*, the point of confederate memorials is "not to put the confederacy into

11 Sweet grass baskets are, like benne wafers, products of slavery, as they are made with a technique brought to Charleston by West Africans (Middleton and Jackson).

its proper historical context, but to maintain its symbols as sites for homage” (42).

The historic market where *Charleston Receipts* is sold also includes a store that trades in confederate artifacts, history books, and of course confederate flags, which again have become the target of a national conversation about history and remembrance after Dylann Roof gunned down nine black churchgoers in Charleston’s Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in June 2015. Roof was widely depicted in the news posing with confederate flags and other white supremacist symbols, which prompted thousands of people to protest the confederate flag. Several confederate memorials in Charleston were defaced throughout the summer of 2015 suggesting that protesters linked problematic memorialization to supremacist ideologies that ultimately led to Roof’s violent outburst (Boughton). Following national public outrage, the flag was finally removed from the South Carolina capitol grounds in July 2015, a decision that was declared a great victory over supremacist ideology.

In the investigation that followed Roof’s arrest, a disturbing set of photos surfaced showing that Roof had toured historical sites related to slavery sometime just before the shooting. *The Washington Post* reported that Roof visited four plantations and the article describes how Roof appeared to be “drawn to former slave-owning plantations recast as ‘graceful’ tourist attractions meant to evoke an antebellum ideal of romance and valor of the ‘Gone With the Wind’ variety” (Tucker and Holley). Roof also apparently visited a confederate museum and several cemeteries, one confederate cemetery and one slave cemetery, in front of which he photographed himself, smiling. Roof’s tour of southern slavery sites prior to the shooting is a gruesome illustration of Loewen’s point that white southern memorials function not as historical sites, but as sites where people pay homage.

In the last several years, the movement to remove confederate monuments has picked up speed, kicked into high gear by the white nationalist rally around a statue of Robert E Lee in Charlottesville, Va. in August 2017, which very quickly turned violent and resulted in a white supremacist mowing down a crowd of protesters with his car, killing Heather Heyer and injuring 19 other people. Almost overnight, confederate memorials vanished across the nation in more than 25 cities, which seemed a great victory in making a public statement that white supremacy would no longer define the American memorial landscape. Interestingly, as Jenny Jarvie for *The LA Times* reports, there has been very little attention paid to confederate monuments that have been erected since the Charleston massacre, often on private (but publicly visible/accessible) land.

In Charleston, and South Carolina more generally, the geographical context within which the Junior League cookbook circulates, confederate

memorials remain, partly because of a heritage act that prevents their removal. The statue of John C. Calhoun on his 115-ft. pedestal still looms over Francis Marion Square, the original site of the Citadel military academy that first formed as an arsenal to stockpile weapons against potential slave uprisings, a historical fact that will not be visible to tourists ("South Carolina State Arsenal"). Charleston's mayor, John Tecklenburg, committed to adding explanatory plaques that would contextualize the monuments more fully, but efforts to rewrite the plaques have been somewhat controversial, and the Charleston commission charged with finalizing the new plaques removed the language that was most critical of racism and slavery (Darlington). All of this context about memory, public history, commemoration and the meaning of slavery and the confederacy, form the backdrop against which the Junior League Cookbook operates.

Our intense national obsession with confederate flags and monuments, very obviously racist symbols, is somewhat shortsighted. Although flags and memorials are potent and controversial symbols, humble items like Charleston Receipts go virtually unnoticed while performing ideologically similar rhetorical work. In some ways, we might argue that the work accomplished by humble items like cookbooks is more insidious as they masquerade as harmless household items handled frequently in daily use. Roof's story illustrates how white supremacist beliefs circulate through a network of texts – confederate symbols, museums, plantations, cemeteries, and even humble cookbooks like *Charleston Receipts*. No one rhetor carries the message persuasively alone, but together these texts persuade through sheer repetition. As Kenneth Burke argues in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, we should think of rhetoric "not in terms of some one particular address, but as *a general body of identifications* that owe their convincingness much more to trivial repetition and dull daily reinforcement than to exceptional rhetorical skill" (26). *Charleston Receipts*, with its million circulating copies, has been busily repeating its supremacist message to every tourist that buys a copy.

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