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Between Women: Domesticity and Their Employers.

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roots to the eighteenth century, by the later period the importance of the sexes in this drama has been reversed; if the woman figures more prominently now than she did then, this shift reflects an increasing focus on her domestic role and on her place as a mother and homemaker in the modern conjugal ideal. Gillis posits a “re-ritualization of courtship” (261) for the first half of the twentieth century in which love and marriage had become indissolubly linked to having and being a family. Early marriage and high fertility were the result, often with disastrous consequences for the ideal of reciprocal fidelity and love within marriage. But Gillis’s study also brings us to an enlarged understanding of how this occurred and why.

Gillis examines nuptial practices from the early modern period to the present and is especially strong on the eighteenth century through the twentieth century. He does an extraordinary and convincing job of linking courtship and marriage practices to economic and social changes in ways that demonstrate the variation and significance of both class and gender. His book illuminates with precision the wide variation over time of those practices, between and even within geographically separated classes as well as their differential effect on the lives of women and men.

Obviously, this book is about much more than nuptial practices. In Gillis’s hands, the history of nuptiality becomes a lens on larger questions, including the relation between motherhood and work outside the home; interpersonal relations within the family and between generations; the differing experiences of women and men within marriage; the relation between marriage patterns and control of the poor; and the effects of the rapid development of the capitalist factory system and the tensions in family life that accompanied them. In sum, this is an excellent study, drawing on a wide variety of sources, that illuminates the links between biology and culture and enlarges our understanding of the social construction of gender across classes and across time.

Between Women: Domestic and Their Employers. By JUDITH ROLLINS. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985.

Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, George Washington University

Scholars scrutinizing the sociohistorical literature for insights into the experiences of African-American household workers will be overwhelmed with the erroneous assumptions, faulty generalizations, and racist stereotypes that pervade the literature.

These distorted views of African-American household workers and the social forces responsible for them are brilliantly delineated in *Between Women* by Judith Rollins. This work meticulously examines the salient past and contemporary problems of the employer-household worker relationship. Earlier works relied heavily on the writings of upper- and middle-class employers to analyze the occupational changes of domestic service in the United States. In this cogent investigation, the author combined Massachusetts case studies and her own experiences as a household worker to explore how class structure, hierarchical systems, and the racial division of labor interact in the private employment setting.

Rollins outlines the origins of domestic service in the fourth millennium B.C. and follows it into the late nineteenth century. She then descriptively details the most difficult aspects of the contemporary household worker's occupation—the strenuous labor assignments and hours. Her presentation of the evidence is impressive, the analyses quite valuable, and the problems painstakingly explained. The author is balanced in all aspects of her research; for example, she outlines several positive points expressed by these workers, including the importance of the immediate gratification of the payment system and the sense of accomplishment physical labor gives to some household workers.

The originality of the Rollins work lies in the description of modern household workers' problems, and the significance of the study resides in the analysis of the nuances of the employer-employee relationship. She lucidly shows how the presence of a household worker "validates the employer's ideology and social world" (156). The book offers very persuasive evidence of the importance of an inferior—a contrast figure that will strengthen the employer's class identities. Rollins's analysis of the nonmaterial benefits of employing a household worker is revealing, and this type of research will assist scholars interested in finding the cultural underpinnings of American opinions on matters of class and status definition.

In an absorbing manner, Rollins's data scrutinize the underlying motives and actions of both the female employer and household worker. Examined explicitly are the ways employers demonstrate their need for African-American household workers to validate their racial superiority and self-esteem. Rollins concludes that the powerless household workers are fully cognizant of the deference acts employers expect them to perform. The employees know that their employers respond with obvious pleasure when they do not stand erect, constantly lower their eyes, speak in poor English, and present an absurd caricature of Stepin' Fetchit. The women are especially willing to perform these acts because this role makes the

household worker feel hers will be the final victory in the hereafter (she has shown that she is spiritually superior to her employer), and she enjoys the success of being able to fool her white employers. With great skill and intelligence, the author analyzes how the actions and belief systems of these women implicitly contribute to the continuation of female gender subordination in the United States.

The book maintains that the change women employers create in the dyad is greatly influenced by the ideas and customs they have inherited from the larger society. The author traces, with remarkable sensitivity, the maternalistic (adult-to-child) caring for the employer and the many ways that this caring degrades the female African-American household worker. She shows the extensive conflict that arises when female employers attempt to assert their superior position by extending influence into the personal lives of their workers. Rollins's research carefully and convincingly affirms that employers believe they have a right to this intrusive familiarity. The employers use this to confirm their beliefs in the inferiority of these workers—beliefs that justify a system that maintains people in disadvantaged positions.

Judith Rollins has written a highly readable book and has consulted an important array of sources. The volume provides rich, well-documented insights into the character, philosophy, and *modus operandi* of household employment. This work will be of great interest to the sociologist, anthropologist, historian, and other social scientists, as well as to the general reader. Without question, Rollins has given us a perceptive study; this book is a creative contribution to the discourse on domestic work generally and on African-American female household workers specifically. This work has illuminated many of the problems of this large group of women workers and their employers.

Writing beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers. By RACHEL BLAU DUPLESSIS. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman: The Writer as Heroine in American Literature. By LINDA HUF. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1983.

Sydney Janet Kaplan, University of Washington

While psychoanalytic, Marxist, and deconstructionist approaches appear to dominate feminist literary criticism at present, publishers continue to bring out works that utilize older and more traditional