



Love, Wages, Slavery: The Literature of Servitude in the United States

Barbara Ryan

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With the home as the sacred centre of social life, few things could be more important than finding good servants. As slavery tore at the nation in the nineteenth century, the role of servants and slaves within the family became a heated topic, and publishers produced a steady stream of literature instructing households how to hire, treat, and discipline servants. In "Love, Wages, Slavery", Barbara Ryan surveys an expansive collection of these published material to chart shifts in thinking about what made a good servant and how servants felt about serving non-kin, as well as changing ideas about gender, free and unfree labour, status, race, domesticity, and family life. "Love, Wages, and Slavery" offers an in-depth look at the role of household servants both before and after Emancipation. Paying particular attention to women servants, Ryan traces the "servant problem" as it was represented in magazines like the "Atlantic Monthly", "Godey's Lady's Book", and "Harper's Bazaar". Her wide-ranging probe also culls commentary from advice literature, letters and diaries, pro- and anti-slavery propaganda, sentimental fiction, and memoirs of communitarian reform to reveal the fundamental uncertainty about what it meant for some servants to be "free" while others remained fettered to their posts.

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