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Review of 'Love, Wages, and Slavery: The Literature of Servitude in the United States,' by Barbara Ryan

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What is most fascinating about Kenslea's book is his portrait of the awkward dance of courtship conducted in the company of peers and siblings, and here he could more fully establish the novelty of his findings. While some previous scholars such as Ellen Rothman and Lisa Wilson have shown how youth have struggled to cross the troubled waters to matrimony, Kenslea's book brings more fully into view how vulnerable and uncomfortable children were in assuming this new responsibility. He uncovers a specialized form of communication the Sedgwicks and their peers employed; called "badinage," it involved coded discussions of literature to convey private feelings. Equally noteworthy is the deep involvement of siblings and friends of both genders in almost every step of the courtship process. Few decisions were made without closely consulting others. What emerges is a striking portrait of a generational mindset; the younger cohort clearly looked horizontally across, rather than vertically up, the age and social scale for assistance in making decisions. Very recently, scholars such as C. Dallett Hemphill have begun to establish the importance of siblings and peers in the lives of youth in the early republic. Kenslea's findings suggest such scholarly work should continue.

Both of these books reveal the rewards of mining family correspondence for treasures that illuminate early American life. At first consideration, the focus of both monographs may seem narrow, but in each case the lives of the protagonists intersect with a much wider set of players. And as the cast grows, the drama expands to treat important aspects of American society and culture. Ironically, the collective tale that develops emphasizes the importance of private concerns in the lives of public figures.

Rodney Hessinger is an Associate Professor of History at Hiram College and author of *SEDUCED, ABANDONED, AND REBORN: VISIONS OF YOUTH IN MIDDLE-CLASS AMERICA, 1780–1850* (2005).

Love, Wages, Slavery: The Literature of Servitude in the United States. By Barbara Ryan. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006. Pp. vi, 248. \$40.00.)

Barbara Ryan undertakes to fill a gap she perceives between scholarship on servitude, which tends to ignore enslaved service, and scholarship on slavery, which typically overlooks the connection between ideas about slavery and emancipation and definitions of service,

home, and family. Surveying a wide variety of advice literature, letters, memoirs, and fiction, Ryan charts what she identifies as changes in attitudes among both the servers and the served toward non-kin attendance; these changes she places against concomitant shifts in how work, women's roles within and outside the home, and race were viewed in the nineteenth century.

Central to Ryan's study is the scholarship of Catharine Maria Sedgwick, and while references to her writing appear in every chapter, it is most thoroughly explored in chapter one, "The Family Work." As Ryan posits in her introduction, "by setting out new tenets for 'free' service, Sedgwick redrew the contours of household government and thus in-home labor as a whole. Indeed, it is not too much to say that this one writer contributed so powerfully to the literature of nineteenth-century U.S. service that all subsequent advisors had to negotiate her legacy" (p. 11). Unlike many of her contemporaries in the field of "conduct fiction," Sedgwick asserts that masters and mistresses needed instruction as much as servants. She validates the belief in "family-like" service and loyalty but demonstrates that such devoted servants are "raised, not born" (p. 22). Juxtaposed to the insistence on maternal mistress-ship is Sedgwick's attention to a business-minded ethic concerning the consistent payment of fixed wages. If servants could be accused of lacking loyalty to their employers, masters and mistresses, Sedgwick counters, greatly contributed to this want of fidelity by neglecting one of their primary responsibilities as employers. Her novel *Live and Let Live; or, Domestic Service Illustrated* emphasizes that in the most well-served homes, attendants are cared for and their needs considered, yet concern for their well-being is not expected to replace their salaries. One blind spot Ryan observes in Sedgwick's work, however, is that she does not insist with equal ardor upon the importance of regular wages for African-American servants. A possible exception lies in Sedgwick's treatment of the servant-character Martha in *Home*. Although Martha's race goes unstated, Ryan argues that "Sedgwick may have expected readers to know that a modest urban household in the North, which relied on one 'maid of all work,' was a likely place to find a servant of African descent" (p. 35). In highlighting Martha's loving treatment as well as her regular compensation (complete with raises) while omitting her race, Sedgwick, Ryan concludes, underscores her view that treating all servants as members of the family is integral to resolving the "servant problem."

Ryan next moves to a discussion of various experiments in domestic management, beginning with those of the Emerson family. Returning

to a topic explored in her earlier volume, "Emerson's 'Domestic and Social Experiments': Service, Slavery, and the Unhired Man" (*American Literature*, 1994), Ryan carefully delineates Emerson's efforts to create a family-like environment with seamless housekeeping, efforts that included inviting his cook to dine with the family (she refused) and having Thoreau live with and work for them. In her discussion of the Brook Farm experiment, Ryan observes that despite various attempts to downplay or completely suppress the fact, servants were employed by the community. When the funds to hire servants were scarce, members of the community begrudgingly contributed to the household work, although this responsibility fell disproportionately on the women, and the attitude toward such chores revealed a less than egalitarian view.

Most provocative, perhaps, is the chapter on "Kitchen Testimony and Servants' Tales," in which Ryan brings the voices of waged and enslaved servants together. While some scholars of the slave narrative might quibble with the dearth of stress given to important distinctions between the two groups, their treatment here does reveal some noteworthy commonalities. Publishing difficulties, especially the over-involvement of "editors," have long been discussed in relation to slave narratives, but they affected "free" servants' writing as well. In addition, with the mid-century rise in "kitchen testimony," servants' talking became a much-feared potential violation of family privacy. As a result, servants who did talk were often denounced as gossips. The structure of both servants' and slaves' tales was influenced: if a servant were to violate the sacred privacy of the domestic space, she could do so only by appealing to moral duty. At the end of the century, Ryan asserts, protecting the privacy of the home led to increased calls for day service. Unlike Sedgwick and others of her generation, later advisors dismissed the likelihood, or even the desirability, of achieving a family-like relationship with servants. From the employer's perspective, day service could be a means of guarding the sanctity of the family; from the servant's perspective, it would allow the possibility of earning an income without sacrificing privacy and personal time.

Love, Wages, Slavery is a welcome addition to the scholarship on the literature of service in the United States. Demonstrating the interconnection among thoughts on race, ethnicity, various kinds of work, and our concept of home, Ryan's wide-ranging survey of materials reminds us of the complexity of the "servant problem" and the various attempts to address it.

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Elizabeth Manning Hawthorne: A Life in Letters. Edited by Cecile Anne de Rocher. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006. Pp. xvi, 211. \$40.00.)

Ordinary Mysteries: The Common Journal of Nathaniel and Sophia Hawthorne, 1842–1843. Edited by Nicholas R. Lawrence and Marta L. Werner. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2005. Pp. vi, 334. \$75.00.)

The two volumes under review continue the recent and admirable trend in which studies of famous writers' family members are used to shed light on the writers themselves as well as to make a case for the literary or cultural importance of the books' subjects. In the last few years, we have seen major biographical works appear on Mary Moody Emerson (by Phyllis Cole, 1998), Sophia Peabody Hawthorne (by Patricia Dunlavy Valenti, 2004), the Peabody sisters (by Megan Marshall, 2005), and the Emerson brothers (by Ronald A. Bosco and Joel Myerson, 2006). Each, in its own way, attempts to counter the heliocentric approach by crafting a biography in which the more famous person is placed in a subordinate role to his aunt, sibling, or spouse. By editing primary documents, the editors of the two works considered here endeavor to create an identity for Hawthorne's sister and his wife; while both works succeed in their main purpose, their presentation of the materials is less impressive.

De Rocher's edition of Elizabeth Manning Hawthorne's letters reveals a "striking, intelligent, highly literate woman" who "recorded the home front of the American Civil War; critiqued new works of literature by authors whom history has since judged; and captured the changing seasons in a manner often worthy" of Thoreau (p. 191). Of the 288 extant letters by Elizabeth (1802–83), 118 have been selected for inclusion, and they showcase her literary talents and wit, furnish historical information typically overlooked, and refer to people and events familiar to those who will read the correspondence (p. 35). After an introduction surveying biographical and critical commentary