

Edited Collection: *Housekeepers: The Latina Maid in Contemporary American Film and Literature*

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In the US, over 88% of all maids and housekeepers are female, and approximately half of these are Latinas. Social scientists have contributed critical data on the lack of workplace protections they face—for instance, how they are three times more likely to live in poverty than other workers, or how a domestic labor economy is structured around gender, race and citizenship status. But Hollywood films and popular novels show little interest in these realities. Housekeepers, maids, domestic servants—are mostly background props, peripheral figures meant to reflect the social status or affluence of the white protagonists they serve. Further, despite the Latina maid’s widely familiar function as stock character, one that informs public misperceptions and assumptions about Latina women (that most are foreign-born, speak accented Spanish, or are working-class subjects “naturally” suited to domesticity and service), she is rarely the focus of in-depth film and literary scholarship.

Popularized in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement as a substitute for the “mammy” stereotype, this figure is the new face of domestic labor in American movies, fiction, and, more broadly, the popular imaginary. The “mammy” – a literary and cinematic fabrication - shaped assumptions about black women for generations. It helped justify racialized hierarchical structures and left an enduring legacy. Most maids depicted in contemporary American films and fiction are now Latinas, their depictions similarly working to justify gendered and ethnic hierarchies, sometimes perpetuating myths about Latinas as “spicy” and sexually available, others as women “naturally” suited to domesticity and caretaking. At the same time, novels such as Hector Tobar’s *Barbarian Nurseries* (2011) and films such as Alfonso Cuarón’s *Roma* (2019) feature Latina housekeepers as complex characters with needs, aspirations, and opinions of their own.

This edited collection of essays sets the Latina maid at the center of its analyses, exploring ways that representations of Latina housekeepers in contemporary literature and film challenge, perpetuate, or negotiate how Americans “see” Latina domestic workers and more, generally, how these images shape perceptions about Latina female labor and more broadly, the roles that immigrants play in US social and economic life.

We welcome submissions that analyze a specific Hollywood film or contemporary US novel, although comparative studies and/or interdisciplinary approaches are also invited. Interested contributors should send abstracts of no more than 300 words, a brief bio and cv, to Myra Mendible, Professor, Florida Gulf Coast University, [mendible@fgcu.edu](mailto:mendible@fgcu.edu) by **March 3, 2025**. If accepted, completed essays are due June 30, 2025.