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978-0-521-87901-9 - Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household

Thavolia Glymph

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## Out of the House of Bondage

### *The Transformation of the Plantation Household*

The plantation household was, first and foremost, a site of production. This fundamental fact has generally been overshadowed by popular and scholarly images of the plantation household as the source of slavery's redeeming qualities, where "gentle" mistresses ministered to "loyal" slaves. This book recounts a different story. The very notion of a private sphere, as divorced from the immoral excesses of chattel slavery as from the amoral logic of market laws, functioned to conceal from public scrutiny the day-to-day struggles between enslaved women and their mistresses, subsumed within a logic of patriarchy. One of emancipation's unsung consequences was precisely its exposure to public view of the unbridgeable social distance between the women on whose labor the plantation households relied and the women who employed them. This is a story of race and gender, nation and citizenship, freedom and bondage in the nineteenth-century South, a big abstract story that is composed of equally big personal stories.

Thavolia Glymph (Ph.D. Economic History, Purdue University) is an associate professor of African and African American Studies and History at Duke University. She has coedited two volumes of the award-winning *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation* series and published scholarly articles in five book collections. Her current work focuses on a comparative study of plantation households in Brazil and the U.S. South, former Civil War soldiers in Egypt during Reconstruction, and a history of women in the American Civil War.

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*Duke University*



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*To the memory of my parents*

*and*

*for Sebastian, Morgan, and Kristal*

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I *am* the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt,  
out of the house of bondage.

Exodus 20:2

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I am happy to have this opportunity to acknowledge the support of colleagues, institutions, and friends that helped to keep the project that would become this book afloat. I have had the good fortune to work at institutions and with many wonderful colleagues whose own work deepened my understanding of the large processes and movements of history. Funding support from Duke University was critical to the final stages of the book's preparation. In addition, a year spent as a faculty Fellow with the John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute Seminar (2002–03) provided valuable time to revise what would become the first two chapters and, beyond that, a vibrant atmosphere of collegiality and interdisciplinary thinking. Archivists and research librarians at several institutions made the journey smoother. I wish to thank in particular Elizabeth Dunn and Eleanor Mills of the Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library at Duke Libraries for their help generally and for locating and processing the cover illustration. My students, who over the years have listened patiently and often enthusiastically to my obsession with the nineteenth-century South, have been some of my most generous and formidable critics.

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study with him. At the time, I did not have the first clue about how to make this happen. But, clearly, I got that part figured out, which, fortuitously, also brought Darlene Clark Hine into my life. Hal's knowledge of the plantation South, I still think, is unparalleled. But I came to appreciate as much the breadth of his intellectual grounding and the greatness and generosity of his spirit. Ira Berlin brought me into the extraordinary world of the Freedmen and Southern Society Project. The experience of working as one of the editors on this project with Ira, Barbara Fields, Steven Hahn, Steven Miller, Joseph Reidy, Leslie Roland, Julie Saville, and the incomparable staff assistant at the time, Susan Bailey, was an incredible experience and a model of collegiality and collaborative scholarship.

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Thavolia Glymph  
Durham, North Carolina

Abbreviations

BRFAL	Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands
DU	Duke University
LC	Library of Congress
LR	Letters Received
LS	Letters Sent
MDAH	Mississippi Department of Archives and History
NA	National Archives
NCDAH	North Carolina Department of Archives and History
RG	Record Group
SCDAH	South Carolina Department of Archives and History
SCHS	South Carolina Historical Society
SCL	South Carolinian Library
SHC	Southern Historical Collection