

Looking for maid to marry *Greider Daily 11-10-05*

A FEW YEARS AGO AT A WHITE HOUSE correspondents' dinner, I met a very beautiful actress. Within moments, she blurted out: "I can't believe I'm 46 and not married. Men only want to marry their personal assistants or PR women."

I'd been noticing a trend along these lines, as famous and powerful men took up with the young women whose job it was to tend to them and care for them in some way: their secretaries, assistants, nannies, caterers, flight attendants, researchers and fact-checkers.

Women in staff support are the new sirens because, as a guy I know put it, they look upon the men they work for as "the moon, the sun and the stars". It's all about orbiting, serving and salaaming their Sun Gods.

In all those great Tracy/Hepburn movies more than a half-century ago, it was the snap and crackle of a romance between equals that was so exciting. Moviemakers these days seem far more interested in the soothing aura of romances between un-equals.

In James Brooks' *Spanglish*, Adam Sandler, as a Los Angeles chef, falls for his hot Mexican maid. The maid, who cleans up after Sandler without being able to speak English, is presented as the ideal woman. The wife, played by Tea Leoni, is repellent: a jangly, yakking, over-achieving, over-exercised, unfaithful, shallow she-monster who has just lost her job with a commercial design firm. Picture Faye Dunaway in *Network* if she'd had to stay home, or Glenn Close in *Fatal Attraction* without the charm.

The same attraction of un-equals animated 2003's holiday hit, Richard Curtis's *Love Actually*. The witty and sophisticated British prime minister, played by Hugh Grant, falls for the chubby girl who wheels the tea and scones into his office. A businessman married to the substantial Emma Thompson falls for his sultry

VIEW

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MAUREEN DOWD

secretary. A writer falls for his maid, who speaks only Portuguese.

Art is imitating life, turning women who seek equality into selfish narcissists and objects of rejection, rather than affection.

As John Schwartz of *The New York Times* wrote recently, "Men would rather marry their secretaries than their bosses, and evolution may be to blame."

A new study by psychology researchers at the University of Michigan, using college undergraduates, suggests that men going for long-term relationships would rather marry women in subordinate jobs than women who are supervisors.

As Dr Stephanie Brown, the lead author of the study, summed it up for reporters:

"Powerful women are at a disadvantage in the marriage market because men may prefer to marry less-accomplished women." Men think that women with important jobs are more likely to cheat on them.

"The hypothesis", Brown said, "is that there are evolutionary pressures on males to take steps to minimise the risk of raising offspring that are not their own." Women, by contrast, did not show a marked difference in their attraction to men who might work above or below them. And men did not show a preference when it came to one-night stands.

A second study by researchers at four British universities that was reported last week suggested that smart men with demanding jobs would rather have old-fashioned wives, like their mums, than equals.

The study found that a high IQ hampers a woman's chance to get married, while it is a plus for men. The prospect for marriage increased by 35 percent for guys for each 16-point increase in IQ; for women, there is a 40 percent drop for each 16-point rise.

So was the feminist movement some sort of cruel hoax? The more women achieve, the less desirable they are? Women want to be in a relationship with guys they can seriously talk to — unfortunately, a lot of those guys want to be in relationships with women they don't have to talk to.

I asked the actress and writer Carrie Fisher, on the East Coast to promote her novel *The Best Awful*, who confirmed that women who challenge men are in trouble.

"I haven't dated in 12 million years", she said drily. "I gave up on dating powerful men because they wanted to date women in the service professions. So I decided to date guys in the service professions. But then I found out that kings want to be treated like kings, and consorts want to be treated like kings, too". —*Courtesy IHT*