

Gender History, Global History, and Atlantic Slavery

On Racial Capitalism and Social Reproduction

As an eleven-year-old child in the 1750s, Olaudah Equiano and his sister were captured and sold into slavery. “When all our people were gone out to their works as usual,” he reported, “two men and a woman got over our walls, and in a moment seized us both.”¹ Equiano and his sister never saw the rest of their family again.

Equiano’s account of his childhood emphasizes his close relationship with his mother. He was, he tells readers, the favorite of her seven children. As a boy he was “almost constantly with” his mother; he “could not keep from her.” After his capture, Equiano was “weighed down by grief” for her and for his friends.² She had loved him, and—although he provides few details of it—had worked hard to raise him. This is almost everything we know about Equiano’s mother. We know even less about a woman who appears in Boyrereau Brinch’s account of his capture and enslavement in 1758. Brinch tells the story of a seven-year-old boy he met on board a slave ship bound for Barbados. The boy had been captured while driving goats “for his mother” who now “did not know where he was.” The boy feared that his disappearance would mean

1 Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself* (London, 1793), 32. Although there remain questions about whether Equiano was born in what is now Nigeria or in the United States, even those who argue that he was born in Virginia suggest that his account of childhood was based on extensive conversation with Africans. Vincent Carretta, *Equiano the African: Biography of a Self-Made Man* (London, 2005); Paul E. Lovejoy, “Autobiography and Memory: Gustavus Vassa, Alias Olaudah Equiano, the African,” *Slavery & Abolition* 27, no. 3 (2006): 317–47; Vincent Carretta, “Response to Paul Lovejoy’s ‘Autobiography and Memory: Gustavus Vassa, Alias Olaudah Equiano, the African,’” *Slavery & Abolition* 28, no. 1 (2007): 115–19; James H. Sweet, “Mistaken Identities? Olaudah Equiano, Domingos Álvares, and the Methodological Challenges of Studying the African Diaspora,” *American Historical Review* 114, no. 2 (2009): 279–306.

2 Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, 19, 21, 35.

his family would starve, as “there was no one to help [his mother] now,” his father having previously been enslaved.³

Not surprisingly, Equiano’s mother and the mother of this unnamed boy rarely feature in accounts of the four-hundred-year system of slavery that forced more than twelve million people onto ships that crossed the Atlantic Ocean. Turning our attention to the women who lost their children to Atlantic slavery allows us to bring together insights from two fields of study that have operated in largely separate domains. The first is global history, a methodology that follows connections through time and across distance in order better to understand historical development at different spatial scales. The second is gender history, an approach that examines the production and effect of patriarchal power—and more generally, of hierarchies between men and women, the production of gendered categories, and the work of gender in figuring other kinds of power relations.

Bringing these approaches together yields two important conclusions. First, a principal reason that Atlantic slavery could expand so far and so fast was that it built on existing European patriarchal systems that divided women into categories: the virtuous, who could marry and be a conduit for the transmission of property; and those whose childbearing outside of legitimate marriage did not enable the transfer of property. The expansion of Atlantic slavery intensified and racialized this set of divisions so that, in the Americas at least, the first group transmitted property (including ownership of people), while the second group (enslaved Black women) transmitted only slavery.⁴ More than a racialization of the longstanding virgin/whore dichotomy, this was a system that used patterns of marriage, legitimacy, and inheritance to clarify who was and was not enslavable and to ensure that the profits of slavery remained concentrated among those it racialized as white. The flow of profits around the Atlantic world, whether from plantation colonies to European metropolitan centers, or within plantation regions, worked as it did because of racialized patriarchal systems of inheritance.

Second, considering the social reproduction of the Atlantic slave system within a broad geographic perspective helps us to see beyond the vital insight that enslaved women were exploited for their reproductive as well as their productive work. At Atlantic scale, slavery relied on a global gendered division of labor to reproduce itself. In addition to the reproductive work of women in the plantation zones, the Atlantic slave system exploited the reproductive labor of women in Africa in birthing and bringing up children to provide it with a seemingly unending supply of enslaved workers. Later, internal slave trades within the Americas would connect the reproductive labor of enslaved women in regions like the Chesapeake and northeastern Brazil to the

3 Jeffrey Brace, *The Blind African Slave: Memoirs of Boyrereau Brinch, Nicknamed Jeffrey Brace*, ed. Kari J. Winter (Madison, WI, 2005), 120–21. For Jennifer Morgan’s discussion of this passage, to which I am indebted, see *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic* (Durham, NC, 2021), 160.

4 This argument builds on critical Black feminist literature, especially Hortense J. Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 65–81; Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC, 2016), esp. 79; Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery*.

newly booming regions of slavery's nineteenth-century expansion. Plantation slavery exploited both men and women, but concentrated this exploitation in different parts of the world.⁵

Global history has underscored the importance of Atlantic slavery to the emergence, dominance, and racialization of capitalism. Histories written in this mode focus on the connections wrought by Atlantic slavery between the Americas, Europe, Africa, and the Indian Ocean, and its transformative impact on economy, society, culture, and ideology. This work began with the efforts of Black Marxist and radical historian-activists, including C. L. R. James, W. E. B. DuBois, and Eric Williams to situate slavery within broader class struggles and the history of capitalism.⁶ In the 1980s and 1990s, their project was developed further through Cedric Robinson's argument that capitalism has always been racialized and racializing, and Robin Blackburn's integration of the history of slavery into a Marxist discussion of the development of capitalism.⁷ More recently, historians within the "new histories of capitalism" school have placed cotton slavery at the heart of that history, arguing that US capitalism in particular was "slavery's capitalism."⁸ Taking a broader geographical approach, allied work examines the expansion of what it terms the "second slavery" in nineteenth-century Cuba, Brazil, and the US South. This scholarship emphasizes the distinctive characteristics of slavery after the Age of Revolution, particularly its relationship with expanding settler colonialism and its integration with an industrial economy supplying and using machinery.⁹

Some of this work provides flashes of insight that can be built on to incorporate a sustained analysis of gender's place in the expansion and organization of slavery at Atlantic scale. Blackburn notes that "Caribbean planters bought more male than female slaves because of their unwillingness to take on the expense of natural reproduction," and in *The Making of New World Slavery* he argues for the importance and limits of planter pronatalism in the demography of the British and French Caribbean

5 While written with an awareness of the rich historiography on the gendered nature of systems of slavery beyond the Atlantic world and in the non-plantation Americas, this article focuses primarily on plantation-based Atlantic slavery. By no means all enslaved people lived and worked on plantations, but the wealth extracted from enslaved people's labor in high-density plantation societies was the most important stimulus for the expansion of the Atlantic system.

6 C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York, 1963); W. E. B. DuBois, "Marxism and the Negro Problem," *Crisis* 40, no. 5 (1933): 103–4, 118; Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (London, 1967).

7 Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (London, 1983); Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776–1848* (London, 1988); Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern 1492–1800* (London, 1997).

8 Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A New History of Global Capitalism* (New York, 2014); Sven Beckert and Christine Desan, *American Capitalism: New Histories* (New York, 2018); Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman, eds., *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development* (Philadelphia, PA, 2016); Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York, 2014); Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, MA, 2013).

9 Most prominently in the work of Dale W. Tomich, for instance: *New Frontiers of Slavery* (Albany, NY, 2015), and *The Politics of the Second Slavery* (Albany, NY, 2016).

sugar colonies.¹⁰ Walter Johnson discusses the sexual coercion that underlay the growth of the enslaved population in the Deep South, including the planter practice of purchasing women to become sexual partners of enslaved men.¹¹ Yet neither historian pays sustained attention to gendered power in the broader contours of their work. Indeed, both the older tradition of Black radicalism and the new global history of slavery lend only passing consideration to gender or women. As Amy Dru Stanley notes, neither gender analysis nor the history of women appear in the “new history of capitalism” literature, including in the iteration focused on slavery.¹² Nor are these topics of much importance to “second slavery” scholars. Global historians more generally have been slow to take gender history seriously.¹³

Nevertheless, historians have long regarded slavery as gendered. Pathbreaking work by activist-intellectuals including Lucille Mathurin Mair and Angela Davis appeared in the early 1970s.¹⁴ The first monographs on women and slavery, published in the 1980s, emphasized the dual exploitation of enslaved women in the Americas for their reproductive and productive work, examined enslaved women’s and men’s differentiated experience of labor regimes, and analyzed the importance of the patriarchal household as a model for the plantation at large.¹⁵ Scholars in this period working on the Caribbean, including Rhoda Reddock, Karen Fog Olwig, and Marietta Morrissey, used the concept of social reproduction to understand the role of gender within Atlantic slavery, although without explicitly considering the reproductive work of women in Africa.¹⁶ More recent scholarship has extended and sometimes challenged this research. Historians have investigated enslaved women’s cultures of pregnancy, birth, and infant care; considered the role of slaveholding women in sustaining and promoting slavery;

10 Blackburn, *Overthrow*, 20; Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 426–30, 443.

11 Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 191–99.

12 Amy Dru Stanley, “Histories of Capitalism and Sex Difference,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 36, no. 2 (2016): 343–50.

13 M. Wiesner-Hanks, “World History and the History of Women, Gender, and Sexuality,” *Journal of World History* 18, no. 1 (2007): 53–67. For similar critiques, see Amy Stanley, “Maid-servants’ Tales: Narrating Domestic and Global History in Eurasia, 1600–1900,” *American Historical Review* 121, no. 2 (2016): 437–60; Nan Enstad, “The ‘Sonorous Summons’ of the New History of Capitalism, Or, What Are We Talking about When We Talk about Economy?,” *Modern American History* 2, no. 1 (2019): 1–13; Katherine Paugh, “The New History of Capitalism and the Political Economy of Reproduction,” *Past and Present* (blog), December 10, 2020, <https://pastandpresent.org.uk/the-new-history-of-capitalism-and-the-political-economy-of-reproduction/>.

14 Lucille Mathurin Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica, 1655–1844* (Mona, Jamaica, 2006); Angela Davis, “Reflections on the Black Woman’s Role in the Community of Slaves,” *Massachusetts Review* 13, no. 1/2 (1972): 81–100. Mair’s book began as a PhD dissertation; completed at the University of the West Indies in 1974, it remained unpublished until 2006.

15 Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York, 1985); Hilary McD Beckles, *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1989); Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650–1838* (London, 1990); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1988); Arlette Gautier, *Les sœurs de Solitude: Femmes et esclavage aux Antilles du XVIII^e au XIX^e siècle* (1985; repr., Rennes, 2019); Sonia Maria Giacomini, *Mulher e escrava: Uma introdução histórica ao estudo da mulher negra no Brasil* (Petrópolis, Brazil, 1988).

16 Karen Fog Olwig, *Cultural Adaptation and Resistance on St. John: Three Centuries of Afro-Caribbean Life* (Gainesville, FL, 1985); Rhoda Reddock, “Women and Slavery in the Caribbean: A Feminist Perspective,” *Latin American Perspectives* 12, no. 1 (1985): 63–80; Marietta Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World: Gender Stratification in the Caribbean* (Lawrence, KS, 1989).

discussed the challenges of writing enslaved women's lives and perspectives into history with power-laden sources; and attended to the gendered spatialities of slave societies.¹⁷ Scholarship on enslaved family life also provides insights into gender relations and power.¹⁸ Historians of gender and slavery have a rich historiography on which to draw.

Even so, most historians of gender and slavery have seen gender at the scale of the individual, family, plantation, region, colony, or nation. Some of the most productive research strategies have involved unpacking stories and testimonies of individuals and families.¹⁹ The analytic implications of such strategies—wedded to feminist commitments that center the voice and agency of enslaved women—have been large, but have not been fully integrated into more general histories of slavery. Even when historians have made explicit claims about the gendered contribution of slavery to capitalism or modernity, they have largely done so on a national scale, particularly in work on the United States.²⁰ There has been so little systematic overlap between gender and global histories of slavery that some historians see them as inherently opposed. Sebastian Conrad explicitly contrasts the two approaches. Gender history, he writes, allows historians to “tell new stories about families and childhood, sexuality and masculinity,” while global histories focus on comparing other forms of enslavement, the creation of

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- 17 Important work on these themes includes Sasha Turner, *Contested Bodies: Pregnancy, Childrearing and Slavery in Jamaica, 1770–1834* (Philadelphia, PA, 2017); Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia, PA, 2004); Stephanie Jones-Rogers, *They Were Her Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South* (New Haven, CT, 2019); Katherine Paugh, *The Politics of Reproduction: Race, Medicine, and Fertility in the Age of Abolition* (Oxford, 2017); Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia, PA, 2016); Bernard Moitt, *Women and Slavery in the French Antilles, 1635–1848* (Bloomington, IN, 2001); Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004); Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge, MA, 2008). See also two important collections: David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine, eds., *More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas* (Bloomington, IN, 1996); Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers, and Joseph C. Miller, eds., *Women and Slavery, Volume Two: The Modern Atlantic* (Athens, OH, 2008).
- 18 See for example Aisnara Perera Díaz and María de los Ángeles Meriño Fuentes, “Esclavitud, familia y parroquia en Cuba: Otra mirada desde la microhistoria,” *Revista Mexicana de sociología* 68, no. 1 (2006): 137–79; Brenda E. Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York, 1996); Robert W. Slenes, *Na senzala, uma flor: Esperanças e recordações na formação da família escrava: Brasil, Sudeste, século XIX* (Rio de Janeiro, 1999); Tera W. Hunter, *Bound in Wedlock: Slave and Free Black Marriage in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 2017).
- 19 For instance, Sandra Lauderdale Graham, *Caetana Says No: Women's Stories from a Brazilian Slave Society* (Cambridge, 2002); Melton Alonza McLaurin, *Celia, a Slave* (Athens, GA, 1991); W. Caleb McDaniel, *Sweet Taste of Liberty: A True Story of Slavery and Restitution in America* (New York, 2019); Rebecca J. Scott and Jean M. Hébrard, *Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge, MA, 2012); María Elisa Velázquez and Carolina González Undurraga, eds., *Mujeres africanas y afrodescendientes: Experiencias de esclavitud y libertad en América Latina y África, siglos XVI al XIX* (Mexico City, 2018); Erica Ball, Tatiana Seijas, and Terri L. Snyder, eds., *As If She Were Free: A Collective Biography of Women and Emancipation in the Americas* (Cambridge, 2020).
- 20 Daina Ramey Berry, *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved from Womb to Grave in the Building of a Nation* (Boston, 2017); Ned Sublette and Constance Sublette, *The American Slave Coast: A History of the Slave-Breeding Industry* (Chicago 2016). Significant exceptions include Claire Robertson and Marsha Robinson, “Re-Modeling Slavery as If Women Mattered,” in *Women and Slavery, Volume Two: The Modern Atlantic*, ed. Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers, and Joseph C. Miller (Athens, OH, 2008), 253–83; Jessica Marie Johnson, *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World* (Philadelphia, PA, 2020); Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery*.

a “Black Atlantic,” the repercussions of the slave trade in West Africa, and connections among Atlantic, trans-Saharan, and Indian Ocean trades.²¹

Yet, global and gender histories do not have to be understood as discrete alternatives. Indeed, integrating these approaches (using Conrad’s sense of a global history that investigates connections and makes explicit comparisons across space and beyond national borders and imperial territories, rather than in the sense of examining the entire planet) improves our understanding of the history of Atlantic slavery as both a global and a gendered phenomenon. Doing so reveals that the global history of Atlantic slavery is better understood as a gendered story, and the gendered history of Atlantic slavery is enhanced by the methods of global history. Without attention to gender, and particularly to reproductive work, the global history of Atlantic slavery will remain inevitably incomplete.

An intertwined approach to Atlantic slavery must build on work focused on gender and unfree labor on a global scale in both the present and the past. Particularly important are the ideas of Black feminists such as Claudia Jones and Angela Davis, who pointed to the centrality of women’s reproductive labor under plantation slavery in the United States, and to the importance of the relationship between Black women’s paid and unpaid domestic work in the post-emancipation period.²² Alongside and sometimes in dialogue with this work is the school of “social reproduction feminism,” particularly the work of Silvia Federici, Maria Mies, and Selma James. Influenced by Italian Marxism in the 1960s and 1970s, Federici, Mies and James recognized enslaved women’s reproductive labor as one foundation of capitalism. Their discussions of slavery focused mainly on the role of reproduction in Britain’s slavery-based colonies.²³ Scholar-activists including Tithi Bhattacharya, Susan Ferguson, Gargi Bhattacharyya, and The Care Collective have recently updated this work with reference to the contemporary “crisis of care.”²⁴

In 2016, the philosopher Nancy Fraser identified successive “regimes of social reproduction-cum-economic production” from the late nineteenth century to the present: historically specific forms of capitalism that have integrated the production of commodities and services with the necessary but frequently overlooked work that enables

21 Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton, NJ, 2016), 11–12.

22 Claudia Jones, *An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman!* (New York [reprinted from *Political Affairs*, June 1949]), <https://palmm.digital.fvc.org/islandora/object/ucf%3A4865>. Davis, “Reflections on the Black Woman’s Role in the Community of Slaves.” For analysis of work by Jones and Davis (among others) as part of the tradition on which social reproduction feminism builds, see Susan Ferguson, *Women and Work: Feminism, Labour, and Social Reproduction* (London, 2020).

23 Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation* (Brooklyn, NY, 2004), 104–5, 112–15; Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (1986; repr., London, 1998), 90–93; Selma James, *Sex, Race and Class: The Perspective of Winning: A Selection of Writings 1952–2011*, ed. Nina López (Oakland, CA, 2012), 98.

24 Tithi Bhattacharya, ed., *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression* (London, 2017); Ferguson, *Women and Work*; Gargi Bhattacharyya, *Rethinking Racial Capitalism: Questions of Reproduction and Survival* (London, 2018); The Care Collective, *The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence* (London, 2020).

the continuation of productive activity, on both a daily and a generational basis.²⁵ Fraser draws on Marxist feminist analyses that investigate reproductive labor, which she defines as the “social capacities ... available for birthing and raising children, caring for friends and family members, maintaining households and broader communities, and sustaining connections more generally”—pursuits that Susan Ferguson (among others) refers to as the work of “life-making.”²⁶ While Fraser’s “regimes” do not reach as far back as the era of Atlantic slavery, her historical analysis can be pushed earlier, to consider Atlantic slave societies as integrated into two successive regimes of social reproduction-cum-economic production. The first, extending from the early period of Atlantic slavery to the mid eighteenth century, relied on a spatial division of generational reproductive labor, in which the costs of reproducing the next generation of slaves in the Americas were born by women in Africa. The second, more variegated regime, which developed toward the end of the eighteenth century, involved intense monitoring and management of women’s reproductive activity, especially in those parts of the Caribbean that saw the Atlantic slave trade abolished relatively early, alongside the continued dependence of slaveholders in the deep South of the United States, southeastern Brazil, and Cuba on spatially distant women’s pregnancies, child bearing, and childcare.

Because socially reproductive work is conventionally done mostly by women, it facilitates their subordination to men in their own households and in broader economies and societies. Yet such work, while exploitative, is rarely only that; it has an affective and emotional dimension to it as well, with particularly profound meanings in contexts of racist oppression. As Angela Davis pointed out with regard to the United States, women’s domestic labor was “the only labor of the slave community which could not be directly and immediately claimed by the oppressor,” and thus “the only meaningful labor for the slave community as a whole.”²⁷ “Practices of social reproduction can,” emphasizes Gargi Bhattacharyya, “represent the spaces of maintaining autonomy and a self-defined humanness.”²⁸ Examining social reproduction in the context of Atlantic slavery requires holding relations of exploitation and affect in view at the same time.

Atlantic slavery drew on the longstanding European patriarchal principle that divided women into categories of virtuous or non-virtuous in order to determine the status of their children. Slave societies adapted and racialized this principle, thereby defining the heritability of racial enslavability through gender and using gendered patterns of inheritance to organize race. The very definition of enslaved status drew on conventions about inherited status and legitimacy that cemented assumptions about women’s sexual honor and the importance of their subordination within marriage. Many

25 Nancy Fraser, “Contradictions of Capital and Care,” *New Left Review*, no. 100 (2016): 99.

26 Fraser, “Contradictions of Capital and Care,” 99; Ferguson, *Women and Work*, esp. 120-139. For an earlier influential definition see Barbara Laslett and Johanna Brenner, “Gender and Social Reproduction: Historical Perspectives,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 15 (1989): 382–83.

27 Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (London, 1982), 17.

28 Bhattacharyya, *Rethinking Racial Capitalism*, 58.

historians, including Jennifer Morgan, Camillia Cowling, Sasha Turner, and Melanie Newton, have commented on the importance of matrilineal heritability of slavery in institutionalizing racial hierarchy and alienating enslaved women from their own reproductive capacity.²⁹ Thomas Morris and Christopher Tomlins, focusing on the English colonies, have emphasized the distinction between the civil law principle *partus sequitur ventrem* (offspring follows the womb) and the common law principles of bastardy and property in determining the origins of matrilineality.³⁰ Yet these distinctions can obscure the fact that across civil and common law jurisdictions alike, the matrilineal rule was grounded in broader ideas that subordinated all women.

The gendered principles that defined enslavability in the Americas emerged from Roman law and practice, via the development of slavery in the Iberian peninsula and then the Iberian Atlantic colonies. In Roman law, the principle that enslaved women transmitted their status to their children was a consequence, not a contradiction, of the broader legal meaning of marriage. According to the Roman legal commentator Gaius, the critical distinction in the inheritance of status was between children whose parents were or were not married according to Roman law: “by the law of all peoples [*ius gentium*] a child born of parents between whom there is no capacity to marry [*conubium*] takes the status of the mother.”³¹ The matrilineal inheritance of slavery followed from the legal principle that enslaved people did not possess *conubium* and thus could not contract Roman marriage.³² The sixth-century *Digest* of Justinian, a compilation of Roman law that strongly influenced continental European legal traditions, restated these rules, emphasizing that “people become slaves on being captured by enemies or being *born from our female slaves*” [emphasis added]. The *Digest* separately noted as a “law of nature” (*lex naturae*) that “whoever is born in the absence of legitimate Roman marriage follows their mother, unless some special statute provides otherwise.”³³ Taken together, these two principles defined the children of enslaved women as illegitimate, that is, excluded from practices of Roman inheritance.³⁴

29 Jennifer L. Morgan, “*Partus Sequitur Ventrem*: Law, Race, and Reproduction in Colonial Slavery,” *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 22, no. 1 (2018): 1–17; Camillia Cowling, *Conceiving Freedom: Women of Color, Gender, and the Abolition of Slavery in Havana and Rio de Janeiro* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2013); Sasha Turner, “The Invisible Threads of Gender, Race, and Slavery,” *AAIHS* (blog), April 13, 2017, <https://www.aaihs.org/the-invisible-threads-of-gender-race-and-slavery/>; Melanie J. Newton, “Returns to a Native Land: Indigeneity and Decolonization in the Anglophone Caribbean,” *Small Axe* 17, no. 2 (2013): 108–22.

30 Thomas D. Morris, *Southern Slavery and the Law, 1619–1860* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1996); Christopher Tomlins, *Freedom Bound: Law, Labor, and Civic Identity in Colonizing English America, 1580–1865* (Cambridge, 2010), 455–59.

31 Gaius, *Institutes*, 1.78 (trans. W. M. Gordon and O. F. Robinson, 1988).

32 Alan Watson, *Roman Slave Law* (Baltimore, MD, 1987), 10–15, 21, 47. For systematic comparison of principles of enslavement through birth, see Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA, 1982), 132–47.

33 Justinian, *Digest*, 1.5.5.1 (Marcian), 1.5.24 (Ulpian) (trans. Rebecca Flemming). See also Newton, “Returns to a Native Land,” 115. My analysis of these principles has benefited from discussion with Cassia Roth, who generously shared with me parts of her unpublished manuscript, “Traveling Wombs, Fixed Soil: The Intersection of Free Soil and Free Womb Laws in the Portuguese World,” and with Rebecca Flemming, who helped me understand Roman marriage law and provided translations.

34 On Roman concepts of *conubium*, legitimacy, and illegitimacy, see Beryl Rawson, “*Spurii* and the Roman View of Illegitimacy,” *Antichthon* 23 (1989): 10–41; Saskia T. Roselaar, “The Concept of *Conubium*

Roman law became the foundation for the laws of slavery across the Portuguese, Spanish, and French Empires. The connection between illegitimacy and matrilineal inheritance of slavery persisted in these empires, even as they broke with the Roman exclusion of enslaved people from the right to lawful marriage. The seventh-century Visigothic Code diverged from Roman law in implicitly recognizing that enslaved people could marry.³⁵ This recognition was retained in the thirteenth-century Castilian law code, *Las Siete Partidas*, on which the Iberian colonies drew. The *Partidas* permitted enslaved people to marry without becoming free and stated that an infant's legal condition follow "the condition of the mother"—whether or not she was married. They also specified that an owner's authority exceeded the authority of a spouse and superseded any marital claims: an enslaved man's wife could not order him to "perform his marital obligations" in defiance of his owner's instructions to "perform some service."³⁶ Enslaved women, even those married to free men, did not give birth to free children. For a free man's relationship with or exploitation of an enslaved woman to lead to the birth of a free and legitimate child, he needed not only to marry the child's mother but also to ensure she became free before their child's birth.

These principles defining the inferior form of marriage available to enslaved people were maintained in the Spanish Empire, in the multiple legal codes of sixteenth-century Santo Domingo and later Spanish colonies, in the 1680 *Recopilación de las leyes de los Reynos de las Indias*, and in the 1789 *Real Cédula ... sobre la educación, trato y ocupaciones de los esclavos* [*Royal Decree ... on the Education, Treatment, and Occupations of Slaves*], which allowed and sometimes encouraged marriage as a domesticating and disciplinary institution, albeit in restricted form. Owners were not supposed to stand in the way of slave marriages, but enslaved men's rights over their wives were subordinate to the rights of owners.³⁷ The 1789 *Cédula* stipulated that if two enslaved people whose owners lived far apart married, the husband's owner must buy the wife, implying a system of marriage controlled by the owner rather than by either the conjugal couple or their parents.³⁸ Studies of Cuban baptismal records find high rates of marriage among enslaved parents, especially before the 1820s, but also evidence that

in the Roman Republic," in *New Frontiers: Law and Society in the Roman World*, ed. Paul J. Du Plessis (Edinburgh, 2013), 102–22. Rawson emphasizes that illegitimacy in Rome did not necessarily convey the moral disapproval implied by the concept in later Christian societies.

35 Alan Watson, *Slave Law in the Americas* (Athens, GA, 1989), 43.

36 Samuel Parsons Scott and Robert I. Burns, *Las Siete Partidas, vol. 4: Family, Commerce, and the Sea: The Worlds of Women and Merchants (Partidas IV and V)* (Philadelphia, PA, 2000), 977, 900–901. The compilers of the *partidas* did not raise the possibility that the enslaved person might be a woman with conflicting orders from her husband and owner. The *partidas* gave one exceptional circumstance when marriage would lead to freedom: when a slave married a free person with the slaveowner's knowledge, but the owner did not state their claim to ownership. *Las Siete Partidas*, 901.

37 Watson, *Slave Law in the Americas*, 48–50; Daisy Rípodas Ardanaz, *El matrimonio en Indias: Realidad social y regulación jurídica* (Buenos Aires, 1977); Manuel Lucena Salmoral, *Regulación de la esclavitud negra en las colonias de América Española (1503–1886): Documentos para su estudio* (Madrid, 2005), pt. 1, 24–26, 54–55; Michelle A. McKinley, *Fractional Freedoms: Slavery, Intimacy, and Legal Mobilization in Colonial Lima, 1600–1700* (Cambridge, 2016), 77–78, 88–89. For the text of the 1789 *Real Cédula*, see Gloria García Rodríguez, *Voices of the Enslaved in Nineteenth-Century Cuba: A Documentary History* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2011), 47–53.

38 García Rodríguez, *Voices of the Enslaved*, 50.

these marriages could only take place with the masters' approval.³⁹ The rules established by the *Siete Partidas* persisted in the Portuguese Empire, in the influential 1603 *Ordenações Filipinas* and, specifically for Brazil, in the 1707 *Constituições Primeiras do Arcebispado da Bahia*, an important statement of Brazilian canon law.⁴⁰ The *Constituições* explicitly state that enslaved people may marry in exceptional circumstances with permission of the church, should their owner refuse approval.⁴¹ But frequent conflicts between enslaved people and their masters over permission to marry suggest that, in practice, a master's consent was necessary.⁴² Marriage did not convey powers of legitimation to the husband of an enslaved woman. Her children were enslaved whether or not she was married, whether or not her husband was free.

Questions of legitimacy and matrilineal inheritance of slavery were also entangled in the 1685 *Code Noir*, which governed slavery across France's American colonies. The *Code's* thirteenth article stated clearly the matrilineal principle: that the children of an enslaved man and a free woman were free, while those of an enslaved woman and a free man were enslaved. The article came after a series of regulations dealing with marriage. The *Code* allowed enslaved people to marry in constrained circumstances: they had to be Catholic and have the permission of their owner, while the couples' parents could neither consent to nor refuse the marriage.⁴³ In practice, owners often refused permission to marry, in part because marriage could restrict their power to sell the slaves in question.⁴⁴ The *Code Noir* thus explicitly denied fathers of enslaved women the traditional patriarchal authority held by fathers of legitimate women to agree to her marriage.

Though the English colonies drew less directly from Roman law, they too followed the principle of matrilineal inheritance of slavery. The English practice of slavery made use of settlers' knowledge of the institution in the Iberian world, including its matrilineality, even in the absence of positive law.⁴⁵ This principle was stated explicitly in Virginia's

39 Karen Y. Morrison, *Cuba's Racial Crucible: The Sexual Economy of Social Identities, 1750–2000* (Bloomington, IN, 2015); Perera Díaz and Meriño Fuentes, "Esclavitud, familia y parroquia en Cuba"; Adriana Chira, "Uneasy Intimacies: Race, Family, and Property in Santiago de Cuba, 1803–1868" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2016), 123.

40 Margarida Seixas, "Slave Women's Children in the Portuguese Empire: Legal Status and its Enforcement," in *Women in the Portuguese Colonial Empire: The Theatre of Shadows*, ed. Clara Sarmento (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, 2008); Stuart M. McManus, "Partus Sequitur Ventrem in Theory and Practice: Slavery and Reproduction in Early Modern Portuguese Asia," *Gender & History* 32, no. 3 (2020): 542–61; Adriana Pereira Campos and Patrícia M. da Silva Merlo, "Sob as bênçãos da Igreja: O casamento de escravos na legislação brasileira," *Topoi (Rio de Janeiro)* 6, no. 11 (2005): 327–61; Margarita Rosa, "Filial Freedoms, Ambiguous Wombs: Partus Sequitur Ventrem and the 1871 Brazilian Free Womb Law," *Slavery & Abolition* 41, no. 2 (2020): 377–94.

41 Charlotte de Castelneau-L'Estoile, "La liberté du sacrement: Droit canonique et mariage des esclaves dans le Brésil colonial," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 65, no. 6 (2010): 1360.

42 de Castelneau-L'Estoile, 1349–50, 1357; Herbert S. Klein and Francisco Vidal Luna, *Slavery in Brazil* (Cambridge, 2010), 220–29.

43 Louis Sala-Molins, *Le code noir ou le Calvaire de Canaan*, 5e éd. (Paris, 2012); Moitt, *Women and Slavery*, 82–83; Gautier, *Les sœurs de solitude*, [np] ch. 2, para 10–12.

44 Arlette Gautier, "Les familles esclaves aux Antilles françaises, 1635–1848," *Population* 55, no. 6 (2000): 985.

45 Jerome S. Handler, "Custom and Law: The Status of Enslaved Africans in Seventeenth-Century Barbados," *Slavery & Abolition* 37, no. 2 (2016): 233–55; Michael Guasco, *Slaves and Englishmen: Human Bondage in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Philadelphia, PA, 2014), 199–200.

much-discussed law of 1662 and put in practice implicitly across the other colonies.⁴⁶ In Anglo America, marriage was a civil contract rather than a sacrament, as it was regarded across the Catholic world. Because enslaved people could not make contracts, they could not legally marry. Enslaved women's children were—by definition—illegitimate.⁴⁷ Equally important was the principle of absolute property. Jurists understood the status of enslaved people to be governed by the same legal principles that governed the status of domestic animals: the ownership of a female animal encompassed ownership of her offspring.⁴⁸

Across the Americas, enslaved people's marriages, when they were legally recognized at all, conveyed fewer rights than those of free people. Nowhere did their marriages lead to the full legitimacy of children. An enslaved woman could not marry her way into the status of a virtuous woman, but was forever dishonored—a position that, through racialization, persisted if she became free. Moreover, even where it was possible, legal marriage among enslaved people was less common than among free people.⁴⁹ Matrilineal inheritance of enslaved status was not precisely the “profound reversal of European notions of heredity” described by Jennifer Morgan, nor what Camillia Cowling has termed “the exact opposite of what occurred in free society.”⁵⁰ Rather, it repeated and racialized free society's patriarchal principles. It aligned all enslaved women with dishonored free women, and in some circumstances with female domestic animals. The matrilineal principle categorized all enslaved women as sexually immoral, and wrote enslaved men out of the social role of fatherhood. Across the Euro-Atlantic world, the law and practice of slavery racialized the status of dishonorable womanhood and created a separate status for white women, who were differentiated from Black women through their access to marriages that legitimized their sexuality and children even while subordinating them to their husbands. Free women of color's access to marriage distinguished them from enslaved women, but in practice and for complex reasons they married at lower rates than did white women. Racist tropes linking free women of color with illicit sexuality derived in part from ongoing associations between Black women, illegitimacy, and slavery.⁵¹ As European societies used slavery to build

46 Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1996), 132–35; Morgan, “*Partus Sequitur Ventrem*”; Newton, “Returns to a Native Land.”

47 Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge, MA, 2002), 32–34; Hunter, *Bound in Wedlock*, 64–68; Cecilia A. Green, “‘A Civil Inconvenience’? The Vexed Question of Slave Marriage in the British West Indies,” *Law and History Review* 25, no. 1 (2007): 1–59. Hunter (66) notes some exceptions in New England, where enslaved people could sometimes marry with their masters' permission; this was codified in a 1707 law in Massachusetts. These New England variations independently developed the principle of an inferior form of marriage for slaves, in parallel with the French and Iberian colonies.

48 Handler, “Custom and Law”; Morgan, “*Partus Sequitur Ventrem*”; Hunter, *Bound in Wedlock*, 65.

49 Carole Shammas, “Household Formation, Lineage, and Gender Relations in the Early Modern Atlantic World,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World*, ed. Nicholas Canny and Philip Morgan (Oxford, 2011), 373; Moitt, *Women and Slavery*, 84. Orlando Patterson argues that across the world, the recognition of the marriages of enslaved people never implied “custodial powers [of parents] over children.” Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 187.

50 Morgan, “*Partus Sequitur Ventrem*,” 5; Cowling, *Conceiving Freedom*, 54.

51 Brown, *Good Wives*; Emily Clark, *The Strange History of the American Quadroon: Free Women of Color in the Revolutionary Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2013).

their American empires, they expanded the conceptual and geographic scope of legal regimes that regulated the status of women through marriage. In its very foundation, Atlantic slavery built on and racialized patriarchal hierarchies.

The matrilineal principle's definition of enslavability worked not only to dishonor, de-legitimize, and racialize enslaved women; it also and in the same way worked to transmit property and maintain the power of whiteness through patterns of legally recognized marriage. Across the plantation Americas, patriarchal and racist systems of slaveowning family formation ensured that wealth remained within elite white communities while rendering enslaved women vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation. This family formation recurred across the Americas but in intricate and regionally specific ways, examined here across the British and French Caribbean, North America, Cuba, and Brazil.⁵²

In much of the British and French-colonized Caribbean, white migration was heavily dominated by men, who used inheritance patterns and gender norms to funnel property back to the metropolis.⁵³ Though white women in these colonies participated actively in owning enslaved people and managing pens and plantations, their significance should not obscure the fact that white populations skewed heavily toward men.⁵⁴ In mid-eighteenth century Jamaica, there were roughly two white men for every white woman; in Saint-Domingue, that ratio exceeded four men to one woman.⁵⁵ In a context of racist taboos and prohibitions against white men's marriages with women of color, many (perhaps most) white men did not marry at all.⁵⁶ White men were widely expected have children with Black and (especially) brown women, both enslaved and free, but no one expected them to marry the mothers of those children. Had they done so, mixed-descent children born to free mothers would have inherited their fathers' property. Instead, white men frequently left the bulk of their estates to family members back in Europe, especially to nephews, while sometimes freeing and leaving small

52 For another delineation of broad patterns of family and household formation across the Atlantic world, see Shammas, "Household Formation, Lineage, and Gender."

53 Trevor Burnard, "European Migration to Jamaica, 1655–1780," *William and Mary Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (1996): 769; Jacques Cauna, *L'eldorado des Aquitains: Gascons, Basques et Béarnais aux îles d'Amérique (XVII^e-XVIII^e siècles)* (Biarritz, France, 1998), 123, 133; Katharine M. Donato and Donna R. Gabaccia, *Gender and International Migration: From the Slavery Era to the Global Age* (New York, 2015), 61–62; Jennifer L. Palmer, *Intimate Bonds: Family and Slavery in the French Atlantic* (Philadelphia, PA, 2016), 11; Gabriel Debien, *Le peuplement des Antilles françaises au XVII^e siècle: Les engagés partis de la Rochelle, 1683–1715* (Cairo, 1942), 38–40.

54 Christine Walker, *Jamaica Ladies: Female Slaveholders and the Making of Britain's Atlantic Empire* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2020); Paul Cheney, *Cul de Sac: Patrimony, Capitalism, and Slavery in French Saint-Domingue* (Chicago, 2017), 130–60.

55 Robert V. Wells, *The Population of the British Colonies in America Before 1776: A Survey of Census Data* (Princeton, NJ, 1975), 201; James E. McClellan III, *Colonialism and Science: Saint Domingue in the Old Regime* (Baltimore, MD, 1992), 49; Jacques Houdaille, "Quelques données sur la population de Saint-Domingue au XVIII^e siècle," *Population* 28, no. 4/5 (1973): 859–72.

56 Trevor Burnard, "A Failed Settler Society: Marriage and Demographic Failure in Early Jamaica," *Journal of Social History* 28, no. 1 (1994): 63–82; Trevor G. Burnard and John D. Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica* (Philadelphia, PA, 2016), 68–70.

amounts of property to their Caribbean children and, less frequently, to their children's mothers.⁵⁷ Some free people of color, especially in Saint Domingue, built wealth on the basis of these relatively small inheritances.⁵⁸ But on the whole, this family form drove absenteeism—the metropolitan ownership of Caribbean property—and so ensured that profits from the Atlantic economy would remain concentrated, ready to be invested in other imperial spaces and metropolitan industries.

European migration patterns to the plantation zones of North America and to Barbados also skewed toward men, but different disease environments in the mainland colonies and higher birth rates among the white women who did migrate produced, by the late seventeenth century, significant creole white populations and relatively even sex ratios among whites.⁵⁹ In what would become the US South, endogamous marriage among white people became normative. As Kathleen Brown points out, by the eighteenth century “marriage was ... one of the primary means by which Virginia's planters maintained their dominance.”⁶⁰ Familial alliances consolidated property among colonial whites rather than repatriating it to Europe. White women frequently owned property, including property in people.⁶¹ White men in North America were socially entitled to force sex on enslaved women, as they were in the Caribbean, but these encounters were more hidden in North America and less likely to result in freedom for the women or their children. That white men had children with enslaved women was an open but shameful secret in the mainland colonies—especially after they became the United States—rather than an acknowledged matter of masculine pride.⁶² Property was concentrated among white people, but in the hands of resident slaveholders rather than absentees. This gendered and raced inheritance structure led to the development of powerful creole white identities that can be seen in the struggles for American independence and in the defense of slavery.

57 Twelve of the twenty-four Jamaican white men studied by Christer Petley left the bulk of their estates to European collateral kin, while eleven made their white wives and/or legitimate children their main beneficiaries. Christer Petley, “‘Legitimacy’ and Social Boundaries: Free People of Colour and the Social Order in Jamaican Slave Society,” *Social History* 30, no. 4 (2005): 481–98.

58 Petley; Brooke N. Newman, *A Dark Inheritance: Blood, Race, and Sex in Colonial Jamaica* (New Haven, CT, 2018); Daniel Livesay, *Children of Uncertain Fortune: Mixed-Race Jamaicans in Britain and the Atlantic Family, 1733–1833* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2018); John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (New York, 2006); Palmer, *Intimate Bonds*.

59 Wells, *The Population of the British Colonies*, 144–171, 243–5. For the contrast between the Chesapeake's demographic transition and Jamaica's continued reliance on migration, see Burnard, “A Failed Settler Society.” See also David W. Galenson, *White Servitude in Colonial America: An Economic Analysis* (Cambridge, 1981).

60 Brown, *Good Wives*, 251, 249.

61 S. Max Edelson, “Reproducing Plantation Society: Women and Land in Colonial South Carolina,” *History of the Family* 12, no. 2 (2007): 130–41; Linda L. Sturtz, *Within Her Power: Propertied Women in Colonial Virginia* (New York, 2002). For white women's slave-ownership in the antebellum period, see Jones-Rogers, *They Were Her Property*. On Barbados, see Cecily Jones, *Engendering Whiteness: White Women and Colonialism in Barbados and North Carolina, 1627–1865* (Manchester, UK, 2007).

62 Brown, *Good Wives*, esp. 253–60; Nell Irvin Painter, “Three Southern Women and Freud: A Non-Exceptionalist Approach to Race, Class, and Gender in the Slave South,” in *Feminists Revision History*, ed. Ann-Louise Shapiro (New Brunswick, NJ, 1994), 195–216; Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*; Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge, 2003).

The first two hundred and fifty years of Spanish rule in Cuba saw the development of a predominantly white and socially diverse settler-colonial society with a large, mostly male garrison. The broader population had a more even sex ratio (although it still tilted masculine) and little property to transmit. The late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw significant white migration from peninsular Spain, the Canary Islands, and revolutionary Saint-Domingue. As the expansion of the garrison and the opening of the plantation economy attracted more settlers, new plantation owners imported massive numbers of enslaved Africans.⁶³ Cuban whites tried to maintain racially exclusive property transmission with the support of imperial legislation that required a special license for marriages between whites and people of color.⁶⁴ Although these laws were not always followed, racialized patriarchal marriage conventions concentrated property among whites even while the population of free people of color grew. White Cuban property holders kept their wealth largely inside the colony rather than see it flow to the metropolis, providing a foundation for the development of national consciousness.

The law in Brazilian plantation zones favored marriage within racial and class groups. Large landed estates were retained by wealthy white families in the Americas rather than inherited by European kin. Marriage alliances, sometimes between cousins, consolidated property within the sugar- and later the coffee-planting elite. Wealthy Brazilian families adapted Portuguese inheritance practices to keep their wealth consolidated despite a system of partible inheritance. Flexible structures of legitimation developed to enable “natural” children to inherit when it suited the purposes of wealthy testators. Lower down the social scale, marriage was less common and many free people lived openly in nonmarital unions, transmitting their limited property without marrying.⁶⁵ Free people of color formed a substantial segment of the population; eventually, they owned significant amounts of property, including large numbers of enslaved people. Yet gendered and raced inheritance patterns confined them to the middle ranks of wealth-holders and prevented them from challenging the class

63 Sherry Johnson, *The Social Transformation of Eighteenth-Century Cuba* (Gainesville, FL, 2001); Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, 2014); Franklin W. Knight, “Migration and Culture: A Case Study of Cuba, 1750–1900,” *Journal of the Historical Society* 8, no. 4 (2008): 545–66; Laird W. Bergad, Fe Iglesias García, and María del Carmen Barcia, *The Cuban Slave Market, 1790–1880* (Cambridge, 1995). Sherry Johnson emphasizes the uneven sex ratio among Cuban whites compared to the rest of Spanish America; yet, compared to other Caribbean societies, Cuba had a significantly higher proportion of white women.

64 Verena Martínez-Alier, *Marriage, Class, and Colour in Nineteenth-Century Cuba: A Study of Racial Attitudes and Sexual Values in a Slave Society* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1989).

65 Stuart Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society: Bahia, 1550–1835* (Cambridge, 1985), 289–93; Alida C. Metcalf, *Family and Frontier in Colonial Brazil: Santana de Parnaíba, 1580–1822* (Berkeley, CA, 1992); Linda Lewin, *Surprise Heirs I: Illegitimacy, Patrimonial Rights, and Legal Nationalism in Luso-Brazilian Inheritance, 1750–1821* (Stanford, CA, 2003); Manoela Pedroza, “Estratégias de reprodução social de famílias senhoriais cariocas e minhotas (1750–1850),” *Análise Social*, no. 194 (2010): 141–63; Sheila de Castro Faria, *A colônia em movimento: Fortuna e família no cotidiano colonial* (Rio de Janeiro, 1998); Júnia Ferreira Furtado, *Chica da Silva: A Brazilian Slave of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2008), esp. xxiii–xxiv; Ricardo Salles, *E o Vale era o escravo: Vassouras, século XIX: Senhores e escravos no coração do Império* (Rio de Janeiro, 2008), 141–44.

of wealthy white slaveowners for social, economic, and political power.⁶⁶ Distinct from the United States, white male sexual activity with and exploitation of enslaved Black women was openly acknowledged and eventually romanticized as the foundational myth of Brazilian racial equality.⁶⁷

These family systems all worked to ensure that enslaved women would routinely experience sexual violence, their vulnerability standing in sharp contrast to the limited protections granted free daughters and wives within patriarchal societies.⁶⁸ Indeed, an implicit part of the rights of ownership bundled into slavery was a man's right to impose sex on an enslaved woman.⁶⁹ Men with authority on plantations, whether as owners or subordinate managers, expected women to provide them with sexual services. Some became sexual slaves, their stated position as "housekeeper" implying repeated sexual exploitation. Some enslavers deliberately purchased women for sex, most notoriously in the "fancy trade" of New Orleans.⁷⁰ More ubiquitous was the everyday vulnerability to rape of just about any enslaved woman, as the diaries of Thomas Thistlewood suggest.⁷¹ Even where rape of enslaved women was technically a crime, it was almost never prosecuted.⁷² Men's assumed sexual entitlement to enslaved women extended beyond the direct relationship between master and slave. Male planters treated women's sexual compliance as a gift they could provide other men. As one witness to a British parliamentary enquiry explained, "English gentlemen" who visited

66 Zephyr L. Frank, *Dutra's World: Wealth and Family in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Albuquerque, NM, 2004).

67 Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization*, trans. Samuel Putnam (New York, 1946). For a critical elaboration, see B. J. Barickman, "Revisiting the 'Casa-Grande': Plantation and Cane-Farming Households in Early Nineteenth-Century Bahia," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 84, no. 4 (2004): 619–41.

68 The literature on this topic is extensive and dispersed. Substantial specialist works include Sharon Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006); Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance," *Signs* 14, no. 4 (1989): 912–920; Eddie Donoghue, *Black Women/White Men: The Sexual Exploitation of Female Slaves in the Danish West Indies* (Trenton, NJ, 2002); Rachel A. Feinstein, *When Rape Was Legal: The Untold History of Sexual Violence during Slavery* (New York, 2018).

69 For a similar point, see Philip D. Morgan, "Interracial Sex in the Chesapeake and the British Atlantic World, c. 1700–1820," in *Sally Hemings and Thomas Jefferson: History, Memory, and Civic Culture*, ed. Peter S. Onuf and Jan Ellis Lewis (Charlottesville, VA, 1999), 75. Enslaved men were also vulnerable to sexual violence from their owners, albeit in forms that were stigmatized and to some extent criminalized for both perpetrator and victim. Thomas A. Foster, *Rethinking Rufus: Sexual Violations of Enslaved Men* (Athens, GA, 2019); Lamonte Aidoo, *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History* (Durham, NC, 2018).

70 Emily Alyssa Owens, "Fantasies of Consent: Black Women's Sexual Labor in 19th Century New Orleans" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2015), <https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/23845425>; Edward Baptist, "'Cuffy', 'Fancy Maids', and 'One-Eyed Men': Rape, Commodification, and the Domestic Slave Trade in the United States," *American Historical Review* 106, no. 5 (2001): 1619–50.

71 Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004); Jennifer Reed, "'Sites of Terror' and Affective Geographies on Thomas Thistlewood's Breadnut Island Pen," *Caribbeana: The Journal of the Early Caribbean Society* 1, no. 1 (2016), 34–62.

72 Sharon Block found no convictions of white men for rape of enslaved women between 1700 and the Civil War, and cites only one prosecution. Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 65–66. The Jamaican Chief Justice ruled in 1822 that laws against rape did not apply to the rape of enslaved women, leading to revisions of the law in 1826. Turner, *Contested Bodies*, 215.

Caribbean estates were routinely “offered ... black girls” on behalf of the estate owner.⁷³ Such “offerings” created bonds of sociability among free men. At the same time, their legal inability to resist sexual coercion contributed to the stereotype of Black women as loose and immoral—a catch-22 of racist discourse.⁷⁴

The family patterns here analyzed are, in their binary form, a staple of the historiography of slavery. Traditionally, historians have discussed them as variants of “race relations” rather than as intersections of raced *and gendered* power.⁷⁵ Yet what these systems shared was at least as significant as what divided them. In each case, the organization of gender and marriage reinforced white male sexual entitlement and legitimized sexual violence against enslaved women, while ensuring that consolidated wealth remained in the hands of white families.

Patriarchal principles of inheritance and the heritability of status help explain a critical set of dynamics within the development of slavery, but the contribution of gendered power relations was equally key to the social reproduction—in both a generational and a daily sense—of the Atlantic economy. For most of its history, Atlantic slavery was part of a regime of social-reproduction-cum-economic-production dominated by the forced movement of men across the ocean and by the separation of young men from their kin and communities. Plantation owners in the Americas, and thus European traders on the African coast, preferred to acquire enslaved men because of their perceived physical strength and stamina, their inability to become pregnant, and the imputed (often enforced) disconnection from their children. This preference complemented the preferences of African sellers, who saw more demand for enslaved women than for men within Africa, both because the enslavement of women meant control of their children and because women were responsible for most household and productive agricultural tasks.⁷⁶ Women fetched higher prices if sold for retention in Africa; more men were exported through Atlantic ports. In some parts of West Africa, higher demand for women in the trans-Saharan slave trade contributed to the predominance of men among Atlantic captives. Only in unusual regions, such as the Windward Coast and the Bight of Biafra, were a balanced number of men and women sold into the Atlantic trade. The supply and demand sides of the commerce in people complemented one another.⁷⁷

73 “Report from Select Committee on the Extinction of Slavery Throughout the British Dominions,” House of Commons *Parliamentary Papers* 1831–32 (No. 721) vol. 20, question 4522–3.

74 Brown, *Good Wives*.

75 Carl N. Degler, *Neither Black nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States* (New York, 1971); Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (New York, 1947).

76 Claire Robertson, “Women and Slavery: Changes and Continuities,” in *Holding the World Together: African Women in Changing Perspective*, ed. Nwando Achebe and Claire Robertson (Madison, WI, 2019), 193–95.

77 Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, “Competing Markets for Male and Female Slaves: Prices in the Interior of West Africa, 1780–1850,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28, no. 2 (1995): 261–93; Jelmer Vos, “The Slave Trade from the Windward Coast: The Case of the Dutch, 1740–1805,” *African Economic History* 38 (2010): 29–51, 167; G. Ugo Nwokeji, “African Conceptions of Gender and the Slave Traffic,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2001): 47–68; Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades* (Cambridge, 1990).

Recent histories have rightly emphasized that women and girls made up a higher proportion of captives in the Middle Passage than of other flows of population movement, coerced or voluntary. Even so, fewer than 40 percent of captives in the Atlantic slave trade were female. Even during the seventeenth century, when the proportion of women and girls on slave ships was highest, those ships for which gendered data survives carried around 138 men and boys for every 100 women and girls (58 percent male).⁷⁸ Recognizing, with Jennifer Morgan, that “the women” were “there”—on board slave ships and on plantations—should sit side by side with the knowledge that in most plantation zones, theirs was the gender minority.⁷⁹ In almost all plantation societies until late in the era of slavery, the majority of enslaved people were men. In some rapidly expanding plantation regions—eighteenth-century Bahia; Cuba from the 1770s on; the coffee-growing region of southeastern Brazil in the early nineteenth century; nineteenth-century Louisiana—there were two enslaved men for every one enslaved woman, sometimes more on the larger estates. The only plantation societies with balanced or female-majority enslaved populations before the nineteenth century were Antigua, Barbados, and the Chesapeake colonies.⁸⁰ Enslaved women living in plantation zones birthed few children, and their children suffered high mortality rates. The resulting crisis in reproduction—resolved through continuous dependence on the huge and expanding scale of the Atlantic slave trade—represents the most extreme form of what Nancy Fraser has called the universal contradiction within capitalism: its “orientation to unlimited accumulation tends to destabilize the very processes of social reproduction” that make “sustained capital accumulation” possible.⁸¹

In most Atlantic slave societies, owners and plantation managers did not initially perceive low reproductive rates as a problem. They understood regular purchases of African captives to be part of the requirements of running a plantation, and a cheaper option than raising children from birth, which included the additional costs of a mother’s “lost”

78 David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, “Was the Slave Trade Dominated by Men?,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23 (1993): 241, table 1; Donato and Gabaccia, *Gender and International Migration*, 63–72; Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery*, 32.

79 Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery*, 37.

80 Wells, *The Population of the British Colonies*, 274, table 7-4; David Geggus, “Slave Society in the Sugar Plantation Zones of Saint Domingue and the Revolution of 1791–93,” *Slavery & Abolition* 20, no. 2 (1999): 35; Laird Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States* (Cambridge, 2007), 111; R. R. Menard, “Slave Demography in the Lowcountry, 1670–1740: From Frontier Society to Plantation Regime,” *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 101, no. 3 (2000): 190–213; Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations*, 347–48; A. Meredith John, *The Plantation Slaves of Trinidad, 1783–1816: A Mathematical and Demographic Enquiry* (Cambridge, 2004), 41; Aisha K. Finch, “Scandalous Scarcities: Black Slave Women, Plantation Domesticity, and Travel Writing in Nineteenth-Century Cuba,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 23, no. 1 (2010): 101–43; Morrison, *Cuba’s Racial Crucible*, 100; Salles, *E o Vale era o escravo*, 195–96; Richard Follett, *The Sugar Masters: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana’s Cane World, 1820–1860* (Baton Rouge, LA, 2005), 50–51.

81 The literature on the demography of slave societies is too extensive to cite in detail. For overviews and references to more specialist works, see Richard Follett, “The Demography of Slavery,” in *The Routledge History of Slavery* (London, 2010), 119–37; Bergad, *Comparative Histories of Slavery*, 96–113. Fraser, “Contradictions of Capital and Care,” 100.

labor.⁸² In his “Instructions” for managing a seventeenth-century Barbadian sugar plantation, Henry Drax assumed that “those that shall be diseased or Dy” would be replaced through purchases. He did not mention the possibility of population increase or replacement through birth, even though Barbadian planters appear to have made unusual attempts to balance men and women at the point of purchase.⁸³ As Jean Casimir explains for Saint-Domingue, “The existence of family groups and the presence of women were superfluous in a society that supplied itself with labor from beyond its borders.”⁸⁴ Enslaved women were primarily and intensely exploited as field workers and became the backbone of a new type of agriculture: intense, monocultural, export-oriented production, worked by gang labor. In sugar and cotton especially, men and women worked in gangs subject to the discipline of a whip-carrying driver throughout the daylight hours.⁸⁵ In the Caribbean, women were disproportionately concentrated in field work; in Brazilian plantations, at least as high a proportion of women as men worked in the field.⁸⁶ In South Carolina rice plantations, writes Leslie Schwalm, “field labor was women’s work.”⁸⁷ The plantation system’s intense exploitation of adult labor left almost no time for the work of social reproduction that Susan Ferguson calls life-making.⁸⁸ This was true in the daily sense of preparing food and other forms of everyday domestic work, in the generational sense of caring for children, and in the broadest sense, as Stephanie Smallwood puts it, of the “elaboration of specific cultural content and its transformation to meet the particular needs of slave life in the Atlantic system.”⁸⁹ Enslaved women in the plantation Americas had relatively few children, and those born were very likely to die.⁹⁰ By driving out time for life-making, plantation slavery produced societies in which death and mourning were omnipresent while adding to the crisis in reproduction that in turn maintained their dependence on the Atlantic slave trade.⁹¹

82 Gabriel Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises, XVII^e-XVIII^e siècles* (Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe, 1974), 350; Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, *The Trade in the Living: The Formation of Brazil in the South Atlantic, Sixteenth to Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. Gavin Adams (Albany, NY, 2018), 146–47; Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, 37.

83 Peter Thompson, “Henry Drax’s Instructions on the Management of a Seventeenth-Century Barbadian Sugar Plantation,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (2009): 585; Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, 8–14; Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery*, 184–86.

84 Jean Casimir, *The Haitians: A Decolonial History*, trans. Laurent Dubois (Chapel Hill, NC, 2020), 307.

85 On the gang system, see Justin Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment in the British Atlantic, 1750–1807* (Cambridge, 2013); Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998); Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York, 1985), 14–18.

86 Mair, *Historical Study*, 198–203; Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 149; Moitt, *Women and Slavery*, 38–47; Geggus, “Slave Society,” 37. Klein and Luna state that women were a majority of field workers in Brazilian sugar, coffee, and cotton. Schwartz found that in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Bahia, 62 percent of “prime healthy males” and 64 percent of “prime healthy females” were field workers. Klein and Luna, *Slavery in Brazil*, 162; Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations*, 151, table 6-2.

87 Leslie A. Schwalm, *A Hard Fight for We: Women’s Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina* (Urbana, IL, 1997), 21.

88 Ferguson, *Women and Work*.

89 Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 190.

90 On death in Atlantic slavery, see Vincent Brown, *The Reaper’s Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge, MA, 2008).

91 Sasha Turner, “The Nameless and the Forgotten: Maternal Grief, Sacred Protection, and the Archive of Slavery,” *Slavery & Abolition* 38, no. 2 (2017): 232–50.

The slaveholder's control was always temporary and fragile. Enslaved people repeatedly took opportunities to convert the everyday cold war of slavery into open armed insurgency, a development that Joseph C. Miller attributed to the concentration of young enslaved men in the Americas.⁹² Miller's argument risks essentializing women as passive subjects, inherently unable to take armed action; in fact, women played prominent roles in anti-slavery wars, from Nanny of the Jamaican Maroons to the Cuban insurrections of 1843 and beyond.⁹³ Even so, Miller's arguments can be reframed in less essentialist terms. Many enslaved men had once been soldiers in Africa, serving in militaries with more men than women (notwithstanding the participation of women combatants in Dahomey and to a lesser extent the Yoruba states).⁹⁴ Women did more of the work of caring for children, making it harder, although not impossible, to take up arms. Thus, the creation of male-dominated slave societies produced particular risks for slaveholders. That it happened despite these risks shows that short-term goals and benefits to both the purchasers and sellers of enslaved Africans, driven by specific constellations of gendered power, overwhelmed longer-term considerations.

Plantation slavery exploited both men and women but concentrated this exploitation in different parts of the world. Plantation zones were predominantly masculine worlds in which men's physical labor, and the labor of smaller numbers of women, was intensely exploited. The African societies from which men and some women were enslaved, extracted, and exported became integrated into the larger system of commodity production for profit through the wars of the slave-trade period and other mechanisms of enslavement, such as indebtedness, judicial punishment, and the conversion of pawnship into slavery. Studies in Atlantic African gender history have tended to focus more on women as property holders than on women who were themselves property or whose children became property. The minority of urban coastal women who benefited from slave ownership and from trade with Europeans have received particular attention.⁹⁵ But the African women in communities from

92 For slavery as everyday war, see Vincent Brown, *Tacky's Revolt: The Story of an Atlantic Slave War* (Cambridge, MA, 2020). Joseph C. Miller, "Domiciled and Dominated: Slaving as a History of Women," in *Women and Slavery, Volume Two: The Modern Atlantic*, ed. Joseph C. Miller, Gwynn Campbell, and Suzanne Miers (Athens, GA, 2007), 300–302.

93 Kenneth M. Bilby, *True-Born Maroons* (Gainesville, FL, 2005); Werner Zips, *Nanny's Asafo Warriors: The Jamaican Maroons' African Experience* (Kingston, Jamaica, 2011), 133–83; Aisha K. Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba: La Escalera and the Insurgencies of 1841–1844* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2015); Manuel Barcia Paz, *West African Warfare in Bahia and Cuba: Soldier Slaves in the Atlantic World, 1807–1844* (New York, 2014), 130–31.

94 John K. Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa 1500–1800* (Abingdon, UK, 1999), 91–92; Barcia Paz, *West African Warfare*, 38–39; Brown, *Tacky's Revolt*.

95 George E. Brooks, "The Signares of Saint-Louis and Gorée: Women Entrepreneurs in Eighteenth-Century Senegal," in *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change*, ed. Nancy Hafkin and Edna Bay (Stanford, CA, 1976), 19–44; Pernille Ipsen, *Daughters of the Trade: Atlantic Slavers and Interracial Marriage on the Gold Coast* (Philadelphia, PA, 2015); Kwabena Adu-Boahen, "Female Agency in a Cultural Confluence: Women, Trade and Politics in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Gold Coast," in *Shadows of Empire in West Africa: New Perspectives on European Fortifications*, ed. John Kwadwo Osei-Tutu and Victoria Ellen Smith (Cham, Switzerland, 2018), 169–99; Mariana P. Candido, "Concubinage and Slavery

which captives were taken deserve study as well. They lost kin in contexts that were sometimes catastrophic, such as defeat in war, and that at other times involved more incremental advances of exploitation, as in raiding, punishment, and debt-driven enslavement. All forms of enslavement were a loss for the communities that saw significant proportions of their populations trafficked across the Atlantic.⁹⁶ They must have caused fear and grief for those not taken across the Atlantic as well as those who were. Alongside these emotional consequences, enslavement involved the exploitation of women's reproductive labor. The Atlantic slave system depended on the exploitation of women in African societies through the embodied work of pregnancy, childbirth, and lactation—all of which require calories and take a toll on the body—and through their work in caring for children who would themselves be vulnerable to enslavement. The value of all this reproductive labor was integrated into the production of commodities like sugar. The trafficking of people across the Atlantic meant that the main costs of bearing and raising children were not borne by slaveholders. As a result, sugar and other commodities could be produced more cheaply and profitably than if slaveholders had been forced to pay the full cost of the reproduction of those workers on whose coerced labor they depended.

The exploitation of the reproductive work of African women was one aspect of the widespread disruptions to African societies that developed with the expansion of human trafficking from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. It is a process that requires further research in the context of efforts to understand what Rebecca Shumway calls the “pervasive violence” produced by the expanding European demand for captives, the “atmosphere of extreme vulnerability for anyone traveling or working alone or in small numbers.”⁹⁷ Some changes in African societies were a direct effect of the global gendered division of labor that sent men across the Atlantic while leaving women in Africa. John Thornton shows that the resultant skewing of the sex ratio toward women in some Atlantic African societies led to both enslaved and free women doing increased productive and reproductive work.⁹⁸ This can be seen in nineteenth-century Yorubaland, where women whose sons were enslaved and sent across the Atlantic were often captured at the same time but not sold at the coast. Instead, they were forced to work in palm oil production while also doing reproductive tasks, or perhaps sold across the Sahara. The loss of kin, which entailed theft of their previous

in Benguela, c. 1750–1850,” in *Slavery in Africa and the Caribbean: A History of Enslavement and Identity Since the 18th Century*, ed. Olatunji Ojo and Nadine Hunt (London, 2012), 65–84; Mariana P. Candido and Adam Jones, eds., *African Women in the Atlantic World: Property, Vulnerability and Mobility, 1660–1880* (Woodbridge, UK, 2019).

96 Stephanie Smallwood points out that the loss of adult men from African societies deprived their wives and children of the resources and protection traditionally provided by patriarchs. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 58. For a more general discussion of the impact of population loss on African societies, see Manning, *Slavery and African Life*; Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730–1830* (Madison, WI, 1988).

97 Rebecca Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Rochester, NY, 2011), 61.

98 John Thornton, “Sexual Demography: The Impact of the Slave Trade on Family Structure,” in *Women and Slavery in Africa*, ed. Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein (Madison, WI, 1983), 39–48.

reproductive work, was but one aspect of a broader crisis.⁹⁹ Other responses to the disruption provoked by the slave trade—the establishment of new types of residence, the attempted commercial redemption of kin, the formation of protective institutions such as the Gold Coast *asafo* companies—also require further research to fully delineate how African women, rather than slaveholders in the Americas, shouldered the costs of bearing and raising the children who went on to provide plantation labor.¹⁰⁰ The prominence of women among the Angolans who used judicial means to challenge the enslavement of their children in Luanda may speak to the women’s history of reproductive labor in raising these children.¹⁰¹ Similarly, the reconstitution of gender relations among the Anlo-Ewe—provoked by the expansion of the Atlantic market for captives and documented by Sandra Greene—could be interpreted as a response to the exploitation of women’s reproductive work.¹⁰²

Equiano’s mother and the mother of the young goat-driving boy encountered by Boyrereau Brinch become invisible to us from the moment their children were enslaved, but their lives speak to the consequences of the slave system. We cannot know what happened to these women after their children’s kidnapping, but we know that if they survived, their children were not present to provide support and care in their old age. The boy who spoke to Brinch expressed concerns about the economic consequences of his absence for his mother and siblings. When children did not continue to live in or have direct connection with their community of birth, their mothers’ labor went uncompensated; younger generations were not present to fulfill their normative obligation to support and care for their elders.¹⁰³ But because women’s reproductive labor in Africa was spatially separated from the plantation zones of the Americas, it became invisible in discussions of slavery at the time and in much analysis since.¹⁰⁴ The countless African mothers, aunts, and grandmothers who had once cared for the captives on Atlantic slave ships must be seen and accounted for if we are

99 Francine Shields, “Those Who Remained Behind: Women Slaves in Nineteenth-Century Yorubaland,” in *Identity in the Shadow of Slavery*, ed. Paul E. Lovejoy (London, 2000), 183–201; Lovejoy and Richardson, “Competing Markets.”

100 Sylviane A. Diouf, ed., *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies* (Athens, OH, 2003); Shumway, *The Fante*. Other work providing hints in these and related directions includes Emily Lynn Osborn, *Our New Husbands Are Here: Households, Gender, and Politics in a West African State from the Slave Trade to Colonial Rule* (Athens, OH, 2011); Rosalind Shaw, *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone* (Chicago, 2002); Anne C. Bailey, *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Beyond the Silence and the Shame* (Boston, MA, 2006); Barbara M. Cooper, *Countless Blessings: A History of Childbirth and Reproduction in the Sabel* (Bloomington, IN, 2019); Caroline H. Bledsoe, *Contingent Lives: Fertility, Time, and Aging in West Africa* (Chicago, 2002).

101 Miller, *Way of Death*, 160–64; Roquinaldo Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Atlantic World: Angola and Brazil during the Era of the Slave Trade* (Cambridge, 2012), 98–109.

102 Sandra E. Greene, *Gender, Ethnicity and Social Change on the Upper Slave Coast: A History of the Anlo-Ewe* (Portsmouth, NH, 1996).

103 Bledsoe, *Contingent Lives*.

104 Luiz Felipe de Alencastro and Jean Casimir make similar arguments, but without attending to the implications for gender and for women’s exploitation in Africa. Alencastro explains that “with the trade in Africans, the burden of the reproduction of direct producers was transferred to the African families and villages.” *The Trade in the Living*, 147. According to Casimir, “The regeneration of the population fell to African societies, while the reproduction of the workforce—the beasts of burden—was carried out by colonial society.” *The Haitians*, 308.

to understand the global scale of gendered exploitation in the Atlantic system, which established a model for the global movement of labor. As Cindi Katz writes of contemporary migrations, “the social reproduction of a migrant workforce is carried out in its members’ countries of origin. When they are employed elsewhere, this represents a direct transfer of wealth from generally poorer to richer countries.”¹⁰⁵

The spatial externalization of the costs of reproductive labor in this regime, established in the early years of the Atlantic slave trade, continued into the nineteenth century as part of a second regime of social-reproduction-cum-economic-production. Chronologically, this process corresponds roughly to Nancy Fraser’s “liberal competitive capitalism,” or to the period of the “second slavery.” For Fraser, “the imperatives of production and reproduction appeared to stand in direct contradiction with each other” in this period, as women factory workers in manufacturing centers labored so hard and long that the “capacities” of the poor “for sustenance and replenishment were stretched to breaking point,” leading eventually to protective labor legislation.¹⁰⁶ Stretching European working-class capacities for care to the breaking point echoed, at lower intensity and with a different outcome, the dynamic of the pre-1760 period in the plantation world. As Fraser recognizes, the intense labor exploitation of textile workers in Britain could not have taken place without the cotton produced by enslaved workers in the American South. We could add, developing arguments made by Sidney Mintz, that sugar produced in the plantation Americas helped stave off a crisis of care in Europe. By providing easily accessed calories for workers, sugar enabled European women to reduce the time they spent cooking and increase the time they spent in wage work. This process would intensify as commercially produced foodstuffs, usually sweetened, became widely available.¹⁰⁷

While European women’s lives were altered by the greater availability of sugar, enslaved women in important parts of the plantation Americas encountered changes in response to the campaign to end the Atlantic slave trade. This period is one of exception to the global gendered division of labor in which plantations externalized the costs of generational reproduction. The momentum behind British abolitionism gathered force in the 1780s, followed in short order by the Haitian Revolution, which threw the whole system of Atlantic slavery into question. Over the following decades, the slave trade was abolished by Denmark, Britain, the United States, France, and eventually Spain and Brazil, a process with major consequences for the organization of generational social reproduction.

Yet in many parts of the Atlantic world, this era also saw not just continued slavery but continued slave trading, and thus an ongoing global gendered division of reproductive labor. Slaving in West Central Africa increased in these years, fueled by the

105 Cindi Katz, “Vagabond Capitalism and the Necessity of Social Reproduction,” *Antipode* 33, no. 4 (2001): 210.

106 Fraser, “Contradictions of Capital and Care,” 105.

107 Sidney W. Mintz, “Time, Sugar, and Sweetness,” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, ed. Carol Counihan and Penny Van Esterik (New York, 1997), 91–103.

demands of Cuba and Brazil. All of the nearly three million enslaved people who left the region between 1780 and 1867 had been carried and cared for by African women.¹⁰⁸ Externalization of the costs of care was also embedded in the nineteenth-century internal slave trades of the US and Brazil. In both countries, the movement of huge numbers of people facilitated the expansion of slavery. In Brazil, enslaved people were moved from the old Northeast sugar zone to the expanding coffee region of the Paraíba Valley, near São Paulo.¹⁰⁹ In the US, they were exported from the tobacco belt of Maryland and Virginia to the new cotton lands of Alabama, Mississippi, and eventually Texas, as well as to sugar-producing Louisiana, where imperial expansion had opened millions of acres to slavery-based production.¹¹⁰ The population of nineteenth-century Louisiana was particularly dominated by imported young men.¹¹¹ Historians frequently make the point that American cotton was crucial to Lancashire textile production, thereby connecting the British industrial revolution with the expansion of slavery in the United States.¹¹² This argument should stretch in space and time to recognize the importance of the caring work assumed by women in Virginia, whose children were sold South to cultivate the cotton that supplied Lancashire's mills.

Social reproduction during this period varied across the plantation Americas, depending on when the slave trade came to an end, as well as on regional demography and politics. Most distinctive was the United States, where enslaved women's high fertility rates enabled enslavers to relinquish the Atlantic slave trade with relative ease, as they could exploit women's reproductive capacity and their care for children locally. High birth rates also enabled internal slave traffic.¹¹³ Societies elsewhere in the plantation Americas followed a different path over an extended period, with timing dependent on the longevity of the traffic in people. While the slave trade remained open but under threat, purchasers attempted to buy greater numbers of women in order to shift toward a sex-balanced population and facilitate "natural reproduction." Once it was no longer possible to buy African women, enslaved women's reproductive roles came under intense scrutiny.

In the French colonies over the last third of the eighteenth century, planters increasingly sought to purchase women in order to stimulate births on their estates.¹¹⁴ At the same time, debates about the abolition of the slave trade in Britain and its colonies were deeply enmeshed in discussions of sex ratios and the desirability of importing

108 For figures see Daniel B. Domingues da Silva, *The Atlantic Slave Trade from West Central Africa, 1780–1867* (Cambridge, 2017), 21.

109 For a discussion of the gendered consequences of this transition, see Martha S. Santos, "Slave Mothers', *Partus Sequitur Ventrem*, and the Naturalization of Slave Reproduction in Nineteenth-Century Brazil," *Tempo* 22, no. 41 (2016): 467–487.

110 Stevenson, *Life in Black and White*; Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*; Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge, MA, 2005).

111 Follett, *The Sugar Masters*, 50–66.

112 Among the most influential are Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*; Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, NJ, 2000); and Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*.

113 Berry, *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh*; Michael Tadman, "The Demographic Costs of Sugar: Debates on Slave Societies and Natural Increase in the Americas," *American Historical Review* 105, no. 5 (2000): 1534–1575; Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA, 1999); Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*.

114 Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles*, 352–53.

younger women.¹¹⁵ Enslaved Africans continued to be trafficked to Cuba well into the 1850s; during the boom years of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, many slaveholders actively sought to avoid the costs of pregnancy, focusing instead on acquiring and exploiting men in large numbers. But in the early nineteenth century, the Spanish Crown and the colony's largest slaveowners argued for the need to increase the proportion of women in the enslaved population by buying more African women.¹¹⁶ Similarly, slaveholders in Brazil relied on importing Africans until the middle of the nineteenth century, and enslaved populations there remained heavily male. Even so, with the advent of anti-slave-trade treaties from the 1820s, planters increasingly sought to purchase more women. Looking ahead to a time when they would no longer be able to exploit women's reproductive labor beyond the plantation zone, they hoped to create the possibility for population growth without dependence on the Atlantic trade.¹¹⁷ In these debates, as Aisnara Perera Díaz and María de los Ángeles Fuentes show for nineteenth-century Cuba, advocacy for increasing imports of women to raise birth rates could be insincere, serving to deflect arguments for slave-trade abolition.¹¹⁸ But it spoke to a heightened concern with the management of population that was becoming incorporated into policies around slavery—policies that worked through women's bodies and gendered power.

Efforts to shift the sex ratio among African captives were increasingly accompanied by, and then gave way to, intense discussion and regulation of the reproductive lives of enslaved women. From the late eighteenth century, planters in the British, French, and Danish West Indies tried to encourage colonial reproduction through improved obstetric care, material incentives for having children, and in some cases punishments for those who did not.¹¹⁹ Specific measures varied across and within colonies but included: legislative provisions such as mandatory release from plantation labor in the later stages of pregnancy and for a period after birth; limits on the hours or type of labor for new mothers and breastfeeding women; tax breaks for the owners of women who gave birth; and prohibitions on violent labor coercion or the punishment of women. Some slaveowners and plantation states provided incentives to women to reproduce, such as cash rewards or permanent exemption from plantation work for those with large numbers of children. They attempted to monitor and improve obstetric care by building estate hospitals

115 Sasha Turner, "Home-Grown Slaves: Women, Reproduction, and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, Jamaica 1788–1807," *Journal of Women's History* 23, no. 3 (2011): 39–62.

116 Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *El ingenio: Complejo económico-social cubano del azúcar*, vol. 2 (Havana, Cuba, 2014), 35–38; Franklin W. Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba During the Nineteenth Century* (Madison, WI, 1970), 75–76; Morrison, *Cuba's Racial Crucible*, 68–69; Chira, "Uneasy Intimacies," 117–19, 136; Aisnara Perera Díaz and María de los Ángeles Meriño Fuentes, "The African Women of the Dos Hermanos Slave Ship in Cuba: Slaves First, Mothers Second," *Women's History Review* 27, no. 6 (2018): 895.

117 Mariana Muaze and Ricardo Salles, "Família escrava em impérios agrários: O caso da Fazenda Guaribú," *Acervo: Revista Do Arquivo Nacional* 30, no. 1 (2017): 43; Salles, *E o Vale era o escravo*, 202–5; Cassia Roth, "From Free Womb to Criminalized Woman: Fertility Control in Brazilian Slavery and Freedom," *Slavery & Abolition* 38, no. 2 (April 3, 2017): 269–86; Manolo Florentino and José Roberto Góes, *A paz das senzalas: Famílias escravas e tráfico atlântico, Rio de Janeiro, c. 1790–1850* (Rio de Janeiro, 1997).

118 Díaz and Fuentes, "The African Women," 895.

119 For a Jamaican example of a woman punished because her twins were stillborn, see Richard S. Dunn, *A Tale of Two Plantations: Slave Life and Labor in Jamaica and Virginia* (Cambridge, MA, 2014), 162.

where births would occur, and compelling enslaved women to use them. And they tried to reduce the length of time that women spent breastfeeding in an effort to reduce the spacing between pregnancies.¹²⁰ In Cuba, some planters began to adopt similar measures in the 1820s, including the construction of infirmaries, longer relief from field work for post-partum women, greater time for infant care, and release from plantation work for women with at least six children.¹²¹ In Brazil, planter manuals and medical men discussed interventions in women's lives to ensure more pregnancies and decrease infant mortality rates. It is unclear how far such advice was followed; Brazilian slaveholders depended on a combination of the Atlantic slave trade and internal human trafficking from the Northeast to the South until 1850 (the latter continuing until slavery's abolition). After the Free Womb Law of 1871, there was no longer any incentive for slaveholders to encourage reproduction, as enslaved women's children were now free.¹²²

Pronatalist interventions did not convert population decline into expansion. With the exception of Barbados, the enslaved population across the British Caribbean steadily dropped after the abolition of the slave trade to British colonies in 1807; the same was true in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guiana after the end of the French slave trade in 1830, as well as Brazil and Cuba in the last decades of slavery.¹²³ Among other factors, the competition for women's labor, widespread disease, and too little food limited the power of pronatalist proposals. Moreover, interventions like the effort to limit breastfeeding probably had counterproductive results by increasing infant mortality. The measures are more important for the new levels of surveillance and management of reproduction they entailed than for their demographic impact.

Managers in many of the period's plantation societies, especially in the Caribbean, institutionalized alternative systems for caring for young children. In the British sugar colonies by the late eighteenth century, plantations routinely allocated some older women as "nurses" to look after the children of other enslaved women. Observers described groups of infants and young children being cared for close to either the field gang or the enslaved people's houses. Toward the end of the century, debates about the

120 Turner, *Contested Bodies*, esp. 68-111; Moitt, *Women and Slavery*, 45, 93-99; Paugh, *The Politics of Reproduction*, 170-189; Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles*, 355-56; Karol K. Weaver, "She Crushed the Child's Fragile Skull: Disease, Infanticide, and Enslaved Women in Eighteenth-Century Saint-Domingue," *French Colonial History* 5, no. 1 (2004): 98-99; Olwig, *Cultural Adaptation and Resistance*, 7, 32; B. W. Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean 1807-1834* (Mona, Jamaica, 1995), 349-54; Morrissey, *Slave Women*, 126-30; Bush, *Slave Women*, 29-30; J. R. Ward, *British West Indian Slavery, 1750-1834: The Process of Amelioration* (Oxford, 1988), 166-30; Diana Paton, "Maternal Struggles and the Politics of Childlessness under Pronatalist Caribbean Slavery," *Slavery & Abolition* 38, no. 2 (2017): 251-68; Karen Bourdier, "Les conditions sanitaires sur les habitations sucrières de Saint-Domingue à la fin du siècle," *Dix-huitième siècle* 43, no. 1 (2011): 361-62, 366-67.

121 Morrison, *Cuba's Racial Crucible*, 153-54; Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba*, 76.

122 Roth, "From Free Womb," 273; Lorena Féres da Silva Telles, "Teresa Benguela e Felipa Crioula estavam grávidas: Maternidade e escravidão no Rio de Janeiro (século XIX)" (PhD diss., University of São Paulo, 2018); Cassia Roth, "O trabalho do parto: Trabalho escrava, saúde reprodutiva e a influência da Lei do Ventre Livre no pensamento obstétrico, séculos XIX e XX," in *Ventres livres? Gênero, maternidade e legislação*, ed. Maria Helena Pereira Toledo Machado et al. (São Paulo, Brazil, 2021), 109-28.

123 Higman, *Slave Populations*, 72-76; Moitt, *Women and Slavery*, 25; Bergad, *Comparative Histories of Slavery*, 96-97. In Cuba and Brazil, the decline of the enslaved population was partly due to high rates of manumission and self-purchase.

abolition of the slave trade emphasized the importance of caring for children so that they survived to adulthood.¹²⁴ Similarly, in the late eighteenth and nineteenth-century French colonies, enslaved children were cared for by other enslaved women while their parents worked. Writing in the 1790s, Poyen de Sainte-Marie of Guadeloupe described how women left their children during the working day with older women who fed them, bathed them, and tried to protect their health.¹²⁵ Some enslaved children in Martinique were separated entirely from their parents and brought up in the master's house, where enslaved domestic workers likely looked after them.¹²⁶ A similar system of nurseries or "chillun houses," where infants were cared for by older enslaved women assisted by older girls, developed in the rice-growing zone of South Carolina.¹²⁷ Meanwhile, older children in British and French colonies were supervised and disciplined into gang work by female drivers whose role was to "socialize young slaves into slavery."¹²⁸

Although it remained possible to buy new slaves in Cuba, slaveowners made greater efforts in this period to institutionalize childcare—as much to ensure that women kept working as to protect the lives of children. Some plantations established nurseries for the care of small children; in others, infirmaries shared the function of housing the sick and raising children. Older enslaved women, known as *mamás criolleras*, cared for children while their mothers worked sixteen-hour days. According to Esteban Montejo, children lived in plantation hospitals (*enfermerías*) until the age of six or seven, where they were looked after and fed by lack women, some of whom wetnursed the infants.¹²⁹

Through its development of systematic methods of childcare meant to enable the exploitation of their mothers' labor, the Atlantic slave system inaugurated a modern form of managing gender relations that would later become widely generalized. The largescale and hierarchically managed organization of childcare on plantations took place at a point in world history in which it was an extremely unusual, possibly unique practice. In combination with pronatalist measures, Caribbean slavery entailed a more intense focus on the management of reproduction, at an earlier stage, than anywhere else in world history. This is not to downplay the importance of the exploitation of women's reproductive capacity in non-Atlantic, non-plantation systems of slavery. From the use of enslaved women as "reproductive pools" to produce enslaved soldiers in the Chola empire of medieval South India to the high status of some sons of enslaved women in the early Islamic world, slaveowners have frequently made strategic use of women's ability to bear children.¹³⁰ Yet even in other systems dominated by the

124 Diana Paton, "The Driveress and the Nurse: Childcare, Working Children and Other Work Under Caribbean Slavery," *Past & Present*, no. 246, supplement 15 (2020): 27–53.

125 Quoted in Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles*, 354.

126 Gautier, "Les familles esclaves," 992.

127 Damian Alan Pargas, "From the Cradle to the Fields: Slave Childcare and Childhood in the Antebellum South," *Slavery & Abolition* 32, no. 4 (2011): 488; Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana, IL, 1984), 63.

128 Moitt, *Women and Slavery*, 43; Paton, "The Driveress and the Nurse"; Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, 32–33.

129 Miguel Barnet, *Biografía de un cimarrón* (Havana, 1966), 37; Moreno Fraginals, *El Ingenio*, 2:44–45; Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba*, 75–76; Morrison, *Cuba's Racial Crucible*, 153.

130 Daud Ali, "War, Servitude, and the Imperial Household: A Study of Palace Women in the Chola Empire," in *Slavery and South Asian History*, ed. Indrani Chatterjee and Richard M. Eaton (Bloomington, 2006),

enslavement of women within households, their regimes of punishment, reward, and the manipulation of fertility did not reach the totalizing heights found in the Americas in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It has long been noted that Atlantic slavery was a modern system: that we see in the plantation zones of the Americas key features of modern societies—such as time discipline and factory production—earlier than in the Northwest European societies that are still frequently assumed to be the center of the modern world.¹³¹ The management of enslaved women’s reproductive capacity and the hierarchical management of care for children are critical gendered aspects of the “modernity of slavery.”

The global processes through which Atlantic slavery ended were connected to another shift in social reproduction that varied across the Americas. Between around 1780 and 1888, when Brazil became the last American society to abolish slavery, abolition spread geographically. At the same time, enslaved populations expanded across what became the heartlands of slavery—Cuba, Brazil, and the US South—until they finally succumbed to the pressures leading to abolition. Emancipation took different forms across the Atlantic world: some sudden and violent, as in Haiti and the US South; others gradual and managed, as in the British colonies and Brazil.¹³² In many places, the early phases of the end of slavery worked through women’s reproductive capacity. In the northern United States, Spanish America, and Brazil, the shift toward abolition took place through laws stating that the children of enslaved women would be free, though often dependent. Ironically referred to in Latin America as Free Womb Laws, in fact such regulations liberated neither wombs nor women, but only their children.¹³³ Emancipation processes created new legal and social statuses for men and women. Many of those who implemented emancipation policies expected that women would and should be liberated into dependence on men. The upheaval of abolishing slavery called into question other hierarchies, including gender, but these were in many places restabilized precisely through the reimposition of women’s subordinate status. For many West African women, including in Yorubaland, Senegal, and French Sudan, the formal end of slavery met with the redefinition of their enslavement as marriage; they were incorporated into households as junior wives.¹³⁴ In the US South, racial hierarchy

44–62; Matthew S. Gordon and Kathryn A. Hain, eds., *Concubines and Courtesans: Women and Slavery in Islamic History* (Oxford, 2017), especially chapters by Majied Robinson and Elizabeth Urban.

131 James, *The Black Jacobins*; Sidney Mintz, “Enduring Substances, Trying Theories: The Caribbean Region as Oikoumene,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 2, no. 2 (1996): 289–311.

132 For an overview, see “Introduction” in Pamela Scully and Diana Paton, eds., *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World* (Durham, NC, 2005).

133 On Free Womb laws, see Martha Abreu, “Slave Mothers and Freed Children: Emancipation and Female Space in Debates on the ‘Free Womb’ Law, Rio de Janeiro, 1871,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 28 (1996): 567–80; Cowling, *Conceiving Freedom*; Rosa, “Filial Freedoms, Ambiguous Wombs.”

134 Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760–1900* (Bloomington, IN, 2007), 226–27; Emily S. Burrill, “‘Wives of Circumstance’: Gender and Slave Emancipation in Late Nineteenth-Century Senegal,” *Slavery & Abolition* 29, no. 1 (March 1, 2008): 49–64; Martin Klein and Richard Roberts, “Gender and Emancipation in French West Africa,” *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World*; (Durham, NC, 2005), 163–80; Osborn, *Our New Husbands Are Here*, 150–52.

was brutally reimposed during and after Reconstruction through white sexual violence against both men and women.¹³⁵ Throughout the Atlantic world, emancipation meant an increasingly sharp definition of gender.

In places where plantation agriculture remained profitable (such as Trinidad, the Guyanas, and Mauritius), slavery was sometimes succeeded by other forms of unfree labor, particularly indenture. The end of slavery and the rise of indenture shifted the dominant site of the supply of plantation workers from Atlantic Africa to India, and shifted the geographic focus of plantation commodity production to the Indian Ocean and Pacific worlds (Mauritius, Java, Fiji, South Africa, and Queensland among others), where it continued well into the twentieth century. The indenture system echoed Atlantic slavery in its adoption of a global gendered division of labor. Indeed, indentured populations in the plantation zones were more heavily male than the enslaved populations that preceded them.¹³⁶ Plantation owners had a stronger preference for male workers because their access to this labor pool was time-limited. The preference for male indentured workers coincided with familial labor structures and cultural assumptions in India that made women less “available” for indenture. Women in India whose sons left to become indentured workers in the Americas and elsewhere rarely had access to their children’s care in later life.¹³⁷

Meanwhile, in other parts of the American plantation zones (the US South, parts of the Eastern Caribbean, southeastern Brazil), commodity export production continued through systems such as sharecropping, metayage, or the *colono* system, which made use of gendered household work.¹³⁸ Another common pattern saw the development of independent peasant production in systems like the *lakou* of Haiti and the independent villages of Jamaica; again largely organized through household and community economies. These systems involved a less intense form of patriarchy than slavery or indenture—with women often keeping independent control of their property, even after marriage—but their egalitarianism should not be exaggerated.¹³⁹ By the early twentieth century, these peasant-based economies fed into global migrant streams dominated by male migration. Migrating men often moved to work in plantation economies or on infrastructure projects elsewhere, leaving female-majority societies in the

135 Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2009).

136 David Northrup, *Indentured Labor in the Age of Imperialism, 1834–1922* (Cambridge, 1995), 75.

137 For an exploration of these themes in the context of male indentured migration from India to South Africa, see Kalpana Hiralal, “Wives Across the Seas ‘Left behind’ and ‘Forgotten’? Gender and Migration in the Indian Ocean Region,” in *Women, Gender and the Legacy of Slavery and Indenture*, ed. Farzana Gounder et al. (London, 2020), 121–39.

138 Jones, *Labor of Love*; Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Peasants and Capital: Dominica in the World Economy* (Baltimore, MD, 1988); Verena Stolcke, *Coffee Planters, Workers, and Wives: Class Conflict and Gender Relations on São Paulo Coffee Plantations, 1850–1980* (Basingstoke, UK, 1988).

139 Jean Besson, “Changing Perceptions of Gender in the Caribbean Region: The Case of the Jamaican Peasantry,” in *Caribbean Portraits: Essays on Gender Ideologies and Identities*, ed. Christine Barrow (Kingston, Jamaica, 1998), 133–55; Sidney Mintz, “Black Women, Economic Roles and Cultural Traditions,” in *Caribbean Freedom: Economy and Society from Emancipation to the Present*, ed. Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd (Kingston, Jamaica, 1993), 238–44; Mimi Sheller, “Sword-Bearing Citizens: Militarism and Manhood in Nineteenth-Century Haiti,” *Plantation Society in the Americas* 4, no. 2–3 (1997): 233–78; Casimir, *The Haitians*, 362–63.

rural hinterlands. This labor migration re-enacted in new ways the externalization of the work of raising the next generation.¹⁴⁰

The development of racial capitalism through Atlantic slavery and its aftermath relied on gendered processes and patriarchal power at every stage. The matrilineal principle of inherited enslaved status drew on and racialized longstanding European patterns that subordinated all women by defining Black and enslaved women as essentially dishonorable. Its development was intertwined with patterns of property transmission among free people in which white men's willingness to marry white women, while refusing marriage with women of color, worked to concentrate wealth among whites. Meanwhile, the generational reproduction of Atlantic slavery depended for most of its history on the exploitation of women's reproductive work in Africa or in other parts of the Americas, while simultaneously rendering that work invisible. For a relatively brief but immensely significant period, the needs of Atlantic racial capitalism also led the owners and managers of enslaved people to try to intensely manage enslaved women's practices of pregnancy, birth, and infant care. Olaudah Equiano's mother and the mother of Boyrereau Brinch's young acquaintance were among the millions of women whose stolen children disappeared across the Atlantic, and upon whose caring work the American systems of plantation slavery depended. Historians cannot quantify the value of this work. But we can and should make it visible, and investigate its consequences. Without it, Atlantic slavery could not have survived.

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I would like to thank all who have read, listened to, commented on and provided over forms of support towards this article's development over its long gestation: Ana Lucia Araujo, Manuel Barcia, Alison Bashford, Laura Briggs, Randy Browne, Kate Chedgzoy, Adriana Chira, Camillia Cowling, Richard Drayton, Martin Dusinberre, Sarah Easterby-Smith, Bethan Fisk, Rebecca Flemming, Gordon Gill, Rebecca Goetz, Catherine Hall, Sarah Knott, Lisa Lindsay, Maria Helena Pereira Toledo Machado, Jennifer Morgan, Katherine Paugh, Cassia Roth, Barbara Savage, Ben Schiller, Pamela Scully, Alex Shepard, David Silkenat, Sasha Turner, Akhila Yechury, Roland Wenzlhuemer, Emily West, Christine Whyte, Nuala Zahedieh and SJ Zhang. Collectively, I thank participants at the 2017 Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, Genders and Sexualities; the "Mothering Many Labours" conference at Oxford University; the online "Reproducing Racial Capitalism" workshop; the University of Teesside History seminar; the Munich Centre for Global History at LMU; the ETHZ-UZH Research Colloquium in Global and Extra-European History, Zurich; the Edinburgh Centre for Global History; the University of Edinburgh Histories of Gender and Sexuality Research Group; and the "Mothering Slaves" research network. I am especially grateful to Alex Lichtenstein, Mark Philip Bradley, and the anonymous reviewers for the *American Historical Review*.

140 Velma Newton, *The Silver Men: West Indian Labour Migration to Panama* (Mona, Jamaica, 1984), 99–100.