WOMEN'S AMERICA

Refocusing the Past

NINTH EDITION

Linda K. Kerber

Jane Sherron De Hart

Cornelia Hughes Dayton

Karissa Haugeberg

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS


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About the Cover

The three illustrations on the cover speak to the themes of gender, race, class, ethnicity, family, activism, and citizenship that are central themes of *Women's America*. The top image is an 1854 portrait of three sisters, Eliza, Nellie, and Margaret Copeland, wearing fashionable, off-the-shoulder dresses. They grew up in prosperity in the Boston area with younger siblings; their mother, Alice (born in the British Isles and described as white); and their father, Samuel, a clothing dealer and real estate investor (born in Virginia and of African descent). The middle image is a photograph of four Mexican women and a boy waiting at a US immigration station in 1938 to cross the border into El Paso, Texas—probably to shop for the day. Photographer Dorothea Lange took the picture. The bottom image is a photograph taken at the Women's March on January 21, 2017. With San Francisco's City Hall in the background, a marcher is holding a poster created by artist Shepard Fairey, part of a series titled "We the People."

Women's America

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Edited by

Linda K. Kerber
University of Iowa

Jane Sherron De Hart
University of California, Santa Barbara

Cornelia Hughes Dayton
University of Connecticut

Karissa Haugeberg
Tulane University

New York Oxford
Oxford University Press

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press in the UK and certain other countries.

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America.

For titles covered by Section 112 of the US Higher Education Opportunity Act, please visit **www.oup.com/us/he** for the latest information about pricing and alternate formats.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Kerber, Linda K., editor. | De Hart, Jane Sherron, editor. | Dayton, Cornelia Hughes, editor. | Haugeberg, Karissa, editor.

Title: Women's America : refocusing the past / edited by Linda K. Kerber, University of Iowa ; Jane Sherron De Hart, University of California, Santa Barbara ; Cornelia Hughes Dayton, University of Connecticut ; Karissa Haugeberg, Tulane University.

Description: Ninth edition. | New York ; Oxford : Oxford University Press, [2019]

Identifiers: LCCN 2019002677 (print) | LCCN 2019003552 (ebook) | ISBN 9780190945763 (updf) | ISBN 9780190945756 (pbk. : alk. paper) | ISBN 9780190945770 (loose leaf : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Women--United States--History--Sources. | Women--Employment--United States--History--Sources. | Women--Political activity--United States--History--Sources. | Women--Health and hygiene--United States--History--Sources. | Feminism--United States--History--Sources.

Classification: LCC HQ1426 (ebook) | LCC HQ1426 .W663 2019 (print) | DDC 305.40973--dc23

LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2019002677

Printing number: 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
Printed by LSC Communications
United States of America

In Memory of Richard E. Kerber (1939–2016), great friend

of this book and historian by osmosis

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Visual Sources

Preface

To readers and instructors:

For the ninth edition, we sought to streamline the book to ensure that it would be a relatively affordable, one-volume classroom text. We know that instructors will miss some of their favorite essays, as do we. But note the new features and content. In addition to scholarly essays and primary documents, we have added "In Briefs"—short treatments of fascinating topics or people (for example, an eighteenth-century entrepreneur; a nineteenth-century scientist; 1970s feminist legal advocate, Ruth Bader Ginsburg). Six new essays include Miroslava Chávez-García's examination of a murder trial in Los Angeles when it was part of Mexico, Linda Gordon on the women who were central to the renewed Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s, and Heather M. Stur's study of US women who served in the Vietnam War. Among the new documents and document essays are a colonial woman's divorce petition, a list of the property a South Carolina widow owned at her death, and the voices of women like Gloria Steinem on their experiences with abortion in the twentieth century.

The visual content of *Women's America* is important to us: we hope that instructors and students will acquaint themselves with the list of illustrations in the volume's table of contents to gain an overview of the rich materials indicated there.

For the first time, *Women's America* has an accompanying website, featuring an array of both conventional and perhaps unexpected additional material, including tips for films, websites, and further reading. We invite instructors to devise assignments in which students create and propose content for the website, which we would welcome the opportunity to curate. Check out the inaugural website at http://www.oup.com/he/kerber9e.

Acknowledgments

As we started planning the ninth edition, Karissa Haugeberg joined the editing team, Judy Tzu-Chun Wu having departed to contribute her talents to other collaborative projects. The streamlined volume came together smoothly, aided by meet-ups in person in New Orleans and Nashville. We are grateful to a host of scholars and friends who gave us substantive advice, including Valerie Matsumoto, Stephanie McCurry, Daisy Patton, and Landon Storrs; and to others who offered an instructor's perspective, including Katherine Benton-Cohen, Rebecca L. Davis, Carolyn Herbst Lewis (and her students), Kimberley Reilly, and Leandra Zarnow. Over the past ten years or so, the book has been shaped by the good counsel of several friends: we thank Patrick Blythe, Cate Denial, Martha S. Jones, Charles McGraw, the late lamented Elisabeth Israels Perry, Terri Snyder, Barbara Welke, and Sharon Wood.

Thanks go to undergraduate students Emily Galik and Callie Balbeck, who assisted Karissa Haugeberg at Tulane; and to the undergraduates in our courses at Tulane and the University of Connecticut, who are a fount of good advice and fresh viewpoints. We also appreciate help from archivists Mel Smith (Connecticut State Library) and Dean Rogers (Vassar College).

We are lucky to have had the advice of nine reviewers who offered their advice to Oxford University Press. We would like to thank Robert L. Bergman, Shannon Frystak, Jennifer Hernandez, Brady L. Holley, Sherry J. Katz, Nina Silber, Sandra Slater, Sara Alpern, and Susan Yohn.

Family members who helped us keep perspective on life deserve lots of credit: James Boster, Benjamin Benus, and Richard Kerber. At Oxford University Press, Charles Cavaliere has listened to us, understood the book, and given us expert, timely guidance; we thank also Anna Fitzsimons for her attentiveness and professionalism. We are grateful to Lisa Ball for shepherding the book to the finish line, to Susan Brown for her razor-sharp copy-editing skills, and to Anna Russell for guiding us in creating the companion website. And our thanks go to our always wise agent, Anne Borchardt.

Linda K. Kerber
Jane Sherron De Hart
Cornelia Hughes Dayton
Karissa Haugeberg

Introduction

Linda K. Kerber
Jane Sherron De Hart
Cornelia Hughes Dayton
Judy Tzu-Chun Wu
Karissa Haugeberg

> All men are created equal.
>
> —*Declaration of Independence, 1776*

> No State shall . . . deny to any person within its jurisdiction equal protection of the laws.
>
> —*Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution, 1868*

> Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.
>
> —*Proposed Equal Rights Amendment,* submitted to the states, 1972; failed to be ratified, 1982

> Recalling that discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity, . . . [signers of this convention agree] to embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions . . . and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle.
>
> —*UN Convention on the Elimination of Forms of Discrimination against Women, entered into force, 1981; not ratified by the United States.*

In our own time, many people—including many college students—have called for a reckoning: the strict, often binary, terms used to define categories of gender, sexual identity, and race, they explain, obscure the "in-betweenness" of human experiences and personal identities. As historians, the editors of *Women's America* embrace this reckoning. Members of this movement are prodding everyone, including scholars, to interrogate the past with new questions. Laws, policies, and customs have often assumed that categories are fixed. But in practice, ordinary Americans have always found these categories to be confining and, in some cases, punitive. In this book, you will find the stories of people who self-identified as women, including people who, if they had been born decades later, might have also identified as transgender. You will also see how the in-betweenness of identity has sometimes offered people cover but has more often been used as a tool of exclusion.

The current reckoning over binary categories of identity is not unlike the reckoning that gave rise to this book in 1982. The first edition of *Women's America* was published in the midst of intense national debate about what equality means. At the time, women of all ages were deeply engaged in the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s, challenging the many dimensions of unequal treatment of women and men that pervaded American law and cultural practices. They wanted to know why workplaces were still largely segregated by sex and why women continued to earn less than men who did roughly similar work. They wanted to know why it was legal for

employers to refuse to hire women as police officers or firefighters or for medical and law schools to cap the enrollment of women to 10 percent of the class. They wanted to know why only 2 percent of military officers could be women. On college campuses they wanted to know why they were so frequently discouraged from studying mathematics, engineering, or astronomy. They wanted to know why men's sports teams were generally subsidized with student fees but women's sports teams had to hold bake sales to raise their own funds for uniforms and travel.

And they wanted to know why they learned so little about women's experiences in their literature, political science, and history courses. When they examined the indexes of high school and college textbooks, they found the witches of seventeenth-century Salem, Massachusetts; a few women reformers scattered throughout the 1800s and 1900s; and Ethel Rosenberg, executed for treason in 1953.[1] Virtually everything else of consequence in the past seemed to have been accomplished by men. Could that really be true? The first edition of *Women's America* was a result of young women's demands for their own history.

When they searched the past for evidence of changing relations between men and women, inquirers found that the European settlers and founders of American colonies brought with them practices of silencing women—as authors, as lawmakers, and as voters. These traditions contrasted with practices among many indigenous American groups in which women were important storytellers, religious leaders, and clan elders. Scanning the history of American politics, they found that the promise of equality has been central to American identity since the founding of the nation. But equality can be a complex and elusive concept. It is tangled with the hierarchies of race, class, religion, and sexual identity. In the new nation, adult women, whatever their class or perceived racial heritage, were barred from voting and holding political office, but class and race privilege gave some the power of mastery over household dependents—enslaved persons, servants, and children. After the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1920, adult women were entitled to suffrage, but if they were black and lived in the segregated South they were generally excluded from the polls. Women in Japanese and Japanese American families living in California and other states in the 1910s and 1920s were acutely aware of the unjust Alien Land laws that barred Asian-origin residents (who were ineligible for US citizenship) from owning the land they tended as proficient farmers. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, long before women's liberation took form in the 1960s, women in these and countless other communities all over the continent protested and worked against inequalities that riled them. Once you start looking for evidence of women's activities, you find a great deal.

In response to student demand, some faculty invented new courses; others, like Anne Firor Scott at Duke University, "bootlegged women's history into the two-semester introductory American History course." The very earliest such courses were offered in the early and mid-1960s. "Women's history," Scott observed, "developed in close association with women's activism."[2] In the 1970s, new courses were flooding into the curricula—in history, literature, philosophy, sociology, and other fields—and in the same decade women's studies programs took root, stressing interdisciplinary methods and knowledge. But none of these changes came easily. College and university faculties, accustomed to defining what was appropriate for students to learn, were generally slow to appreciate the compliment that was being paid. The new courses and programs were sometimes denounced as "feminist propaganda"—or as overtly political or inappropriately polemical. Women's studies programs, like the African American studies programs initiated a few years before, were typically the result of protracted negotiations; in extreme cases these came about only after sit-ins and other disruptive protests.[3]

The ninth edition of *Women's America* appears at another time of anxiety about the meanings of equality in the twenty-first century. Some of the inequalities with which women have long struggled have been eliminated; others have emerged. As we seek to retrieve the history of women's experience, we are strengthened by the work that women and their male allies have done to protect historical records.

In the nineteenth century, suffragists created a historical archive to prevent women from being denied knowledge of their own history. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony energetically collected evidence of some of the women's movements of their own time. The rich collection of documents that they published—six large volumes, entitled *History of Woman Suffrage*—was intended to be "an arsenal of facts" for the next generation of activists and historians.[4] But, starting

in the early twentieth century, most writers of history ignored it. "If women were doing any thinking . . . ," the historian Mary Beard acidly observed in 1946, "it is difficult to find out [from college textbooks] . . . what it was."[5] In 1933 she edited a documentary collection, *America through Women's Eyes*, in which she argued that an accurate understanding of the past required that women's experiences be analyzed with as much care as historians devoted to the experiences of men. Despite the existence of these documents, books that treated women's history were rare.[6]

STAGES IN WOMEN'S HISTORY

The historian Gerda Lerner suggested that the writing of women's history can be arranged in stages of development, each stage more complex and sophisticated than the last, but all useful and necessary.[7] The first stage she called "compensatory history," in which the historian seeks to identify women and their activities. In the 1970s, some historians began to search for women whose work and experiences deserved to be more widely known. The accomplishments of these women ranged from feats of exploration and endurance to scientific discoveries, artistic achievements, and humanitarian reforms. They included such pioneers as Amelia Earhart, the pilot whose solo flight across the Atlantic in 1933 demonstrated women's courage and daring; Alice Hamilton, the social reformer and physician whose innovative work in the 1920s on lead poisoning and other toxins made her a world authority on industrial disease; Maria Goeppert-Mayer, the brilliant theoretical physicist whose research on the structure of the atom and its nucleus won her the Nobel Prize; and Zora Neale Hurston, the novelist and folklorist who mastered African American folk idiom and depicted independent black women.

"The next level of conceptualizing women's history," in Lerner's taxonomy, is "contribution history." In this stage, historians describe women's contributions to events, arenas, and themes that storytellers of the nation's past had already determined to be important. In these histories, the main actors in the historical narrative remain men, while women are subordinate, "helping" or "contributing" to men's work. If the tone of compensatory history is delighted discovery of previously unknown women, the tone of contributory history can often be reproachful: how is it that men did not acknowledge women's help? Still, the work of contributory history can be very important in connecting women to major movements in the past: the women of Hull House in Chicago, such as Jane Addams, "contributed" to Progressive reforms. Another example is the grassroots, behind-the-scenes activism of Ella Baker, a key civil rights organizer who worked with black ministers as well as the student movement. People know of Martin Luther King Jr. but less frequently of Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, Anne Moody, and others who were crucial to the mobilizing around racial justice and human rights in the 1950s and 1960s.[8]

Once major examples of women's "contributions" were identified, familiar historical narratives were no longer reliable. Lerner saw rewriting historical narratives as a third stage in the development of women's history—one that was more *transformative* than the first and second stages. Things we thought we "knew" about American history turn out to be more complex than we had suspected. For example, most textbooks suggest that frontier lands meant opportunity for Americans—"a gate of escape from the bondage of the past." But it was white men who more readily found on the frontiers compensation for their hard work; many pioneering women found only drudgery. In fact, white women were more likely to find economic opportunity in cities than on the frontier. When the United States acquired Texas and New Mexico in 1848, the inhabitants, who were mostly indigenous and Mexican, experienced the changes as encroachment and loss of political control. But not all outcomes were negative. For example, because there was virtually no divorce in Mexico, women trapped in unhappy marriages often welcomed the opportunities offered by US courts.[9]

Over a decade after Gerda Lerner identified these phases of studying women's history, Joan Wallach Scott and others argued for the importance of using gender as an analytical category that helps reveal power relationships.[10] Gender refers to the socially constructed nature of sex roles. One example of this is that earlier in US history (but not among all groups or with one understanding), concepts of womanhood or manhood were understood as biologically determined and unchanging. As Supreme Court Justice David Brewer put it in 1908, "The two sexes differ in the structure of the body, in the functions to be performed by each, in the amount of physical strength,

in the capacity for long continuing labor . . . , [in] the self reliance which enables one to assert full rights, and in the capacity to maintain the struggle for subsistence." Woman's "physical structure and a proper discharge of her maternal functions" place her at a disadvantage in that struggle, he continued, and justify legislation to protect her.[11] The assumptions that men are self-reliant and that women are not, that men struggle for subsistence and women do not, that women nurture their children and men cannot, reflect the ways in which Justice Brewer and most of his generation understood the implications of being male or female.

More recent thinking about gender challenges biologically essentialist understandings of maleness and femaleness, asserting instead that normative understandings of masculinity and femininity are socially defined ideas projected onto perceived biological differences. It also makes it easy to grasp that, as a social construction, gender has history. Gender practices and ideas about gender must be contextualized historically, as ideas about both have changed over time and space.

Just as historians have argued that gender is a social construction, scholars find that concepts of sex and sexuality change over time. In her study of transsexuality, Joanne Meyerowitz points out that biological differences between men and women are not always clearly distinct. Some people are born with characteristics of more than one sex, as traditionally defined. Furthermore, among experts and medical researchers, understandings of sex difference have not been static. In recent decades, people who desire to alter their sex have been able to do so through surgery and taking hormones. The multiplicity of approaches and the regulations established to reinforce sex differences suggest that the boundaries between male and female can change over time.[12]

And sexuality has its own history, of course. Concepts of sexual feelings and behavior, including attitudes toward how erotic desire should be expressed, with whom, and where, vary among cultural groups and have morphed over time. In the seventeenth century, for example, European settlers believed that women were more lustful and carnal than men. Female sexuality was seen as a source of power and corruption to be feared and controlled. By the nineteenth century, sexuality was redefined. Women—at least white, native-born, middle- and upper-class women—were viewed as having weaker sexual desires than men. Sensuality was attached to working-class and "darker" women—who, so the assumption went, "invited" male advances.[13]

In addition to highlighting women, gender, sex, and sexuality, scholars of women also emphasize the importance of an intersectional approach to studying women. *Intersectionality* reminds us that categories of difference intersect and mutually define one another.[14] In other words, the category of "woman" has different meanings depending on the race, class, citizenship status, sexuality, and able-bodiedness of an individual. Differences among women are multiple. Differences of culture, nationality, and historical memory are exacerbated by distinctions of race, class, ethnicity, ability, and sexual preference. Each of these differences carries with it implications of hierarchy. As Martha Minow writes, "Women are compared to the unstated norm of men, 'minority' races to white, handicapped persons to the able-bodied, and 'minority' religions to 'majorities.'" In other words, difference is not a neutral term.[15]

How can we find equality within a society shaped—like all societies—by differences? That is a challenge we continue to face. We may find it helpful to think about two forms of law that coexist in Anglo-American legal tradition. There is "law"—the rules that are understood to apply to every person on the same terms, whatever their sex. When two coworkers do the same job, their wages should be the same. As one judge famously observed in comparing the wages of a maid and a janitor, "dusting is dusting is dusting."[16] And there is a parallel system that we call "equity"—in which courts search for outcomes that have equal impact even though the specifics may be different. What is equal treatment of two coworkers when one can become pregnant and the other cannot? Is maternity leave best understood as vacation leave, sick leave, or something else entirely? What is equality when one partner does the work of maintaining the household and the other does not? In the 1970s, full-time employed women packed an additional twenty-five hours of work—housework and child care—into evenings and weekends each week. While there is evidence that men are doing considerably more than they used to, the gender disparity in housework persists in the twenty-first century, not only in the United States but also throughout the world.[17]

Although one provision (Title VII) of the 1964 Civil Rights Act squelched employers' routine habit of limiting certain jobs to one sex, most men and women workers are still employed in occupations where substantial majorities of their coworkers are the same sex. The following

statistics reveal how difficult it is to effect structural changes in the labor market. Although women now comprise about half of all workers in the United States and are more likely to have college and graduate degrees than men, they continue to earn less than men in nearly every occupation. In 2017, women who worked in full-time jobs earned only 80.5 cents for every dollar earned by men. But the picture is even bleaker for women employed in middle-skill occupations, where jobs remain stubbornly segregated by gender. Middle-skill occupations dominated by women pay 44 percent less than middle-skill occupations dominated by men. The Institute for Women's Policy Research estimates that black women will not achieve pay equity until 2119 and that Hispanic women will have to wait until 2224. The pay gap affects women in the professional ranks, too. In a 2018 survey of colleges and universities, 93 percent reported that they paid men more than women at the same rank.[18] Much as we would like to think that women and men now occupy level playing fields, the evidence presented here reflects a persistent, societal devaluing of women's work. Why is this so?

HOW TO READ *WOMEN'S AMERICA*

Women's America invites you to join the continuing expansion of our knowledge by exploring the field of US women's and gender history. Our book offers both *primary sources* (materials that were created during the historical period being studied, e.g., diaries, newspaper articles, letters, government records, photographs) and *secondary sources* (articles or books published by scholars who study history). We encourage you to read both primary and secondary sources with a critical eye. As you read, ask questions:

- Who wrote or created these sources? When and why did they create them?
- How did the historical and legal contexts of their time shape what they recorded?
- What can we infer from the silences in historical documents?
- What assumptions informed these writings and artifacts?
- Using the primary and secondary sources in this volume, what questions do you think require further research? What subjects do you think have been neglected? When do you see parallels and applications to your communities?

The changing interpretations of the past are referred to as *historiography*—or the history of history writing. Scholars' interpretations vary, based not only on the information they gather but also on the cultural context in which they work and, to some extent, their own life experiences. That is why we include endnotes—to place the evidence where readers can see it and assess whether the author's interpretations are reasonable and persuasive.

Women's America also encourages you to hone and demonstrate your skills at analyzing images. We have placed visual sources throughout the book—mostly photographs, but also engravings, prints, and posters. Some appear in the essays and documents they are relevant to; for example, in Alice Kessler-Harris's essay on the sexual division of labor during World War II, you will find a photograph of the Women's Airforce Service pilots who named their plane *Pistol Packin' Mama*. Others are grouped in the two photo essays, each of which provocatively addresses a big theme over the centuries. *Women in Public* offers examples of women who placed themselves in the public eye, sometimes risking serious attack. *Adorning the Body* considers the meanings of appearance. Each image in the book is itself a historical document, adding to what we learn from texts. Each one is accompanied by some reflections, to which much can be added by you, the reader. With a modest amount of investigation, readers of this book have discovered a great deal about individual images—their creators, the circumstances of their creation, the response or backlash after the image circulated. We hope that scrutinizing these images will prompt you to raise your own questions.

MAJOR THEMES IN *WOMEN'S AMERICA*

Women's America seeks to capture the burgeoning and rich field of US women's history by focusing on five main themes.

- *Family/household/sexuality*: how women and girls are situated in relation to their familial roles and household responsibilities, as well as women's experiences of sexuality and reproduction.
- *Labor/economy/class*: women's engagements in both unpaid and paid labor; women's secondary status within the dominant economy; and the class positions and divisions among women.
- *Race/ethnicity/religion*: how these categories of difference have an impact on women's experiences, identities, and their relationships to one another.
- *Law and citizenship*: how laws, including those governing marriage, reproduction, work, and taxation, shape the choices open to women and men; how changing definitions of citizenship affect women's national identity and their rights and obligations.
- *The global context of US women's history*: how women's lives are intertwined with peoples and developments around the world, including migrations, trade, diplomacy, and war.

Women's activism has often been described using the metaphor of a wave. The first wave commonly refers to the campaign for women's rights, including suffrage, that stretched from the 1840s to 1920. The second wave describes the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The third wave is used to capture feminist activism of the 1990s onward. However, we believe strongly that to speak of waves is to oversimplify. Important political work by and on behalf of women occurred outside the so-called wave periods. *Women's America* challenges the wave metaphor by presenting a complicated understanding of women's activism that changed form over time but has never stopped unfolding.

What are some useful ways to think about feminism? Although the term *feminism* dates to the late nineteenth century, it was popularized in the United States around 1910, when women were engaged in the fight for suffrage and a wide range of other reforms. Historian Linda Gordon has offered this definition: "Feminism is a critique of male supremacy, formed and offered in the light of a will to change it, which in turn assumes a conviction that it is changeable."[19] Some of the outspoken women and change agents who appear in this book recognized themselves as feminists; others did not. United States history has been populated not by one feminism but by many.

We invite you to study women's history critically, to take part in a bold enterprise that can eventually lead us to new histories and new pathways of historical investigation. Let's think creatively together about the treasure trove of historical materials presented here. We encourage you to seek out new sources that await discovery in libraries, digital databases, auction houses, museums, family keepsakes, and people's memories.

NOTES

1. Stephen E. Ambrose, *Ike's Spies: Eisenhower and the Espionage Establishment* (New York, 1981; reprint 2012), 182–83.

2. Anne Firor Scott to Linda K. Kerber, May 17, 2009, e-mail communication. Scott first offered such a course at a 1971 University of Washington summer session; her syllabus for GIS 468, "The Search for the American Woman," is in the Mary Aikin Rothschild Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. Scott went on to teach women's history at Duke for the rest of her career.

3. For primary documents that chronicle the founding of a women's studies program at Harvard University (late in the game), including the propaganda charge by Harvey C. Mansfield, professor of government, see *Yards and Gates: Gender in Harvard and Radcliffe History*, ed. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich (New York, 2004), 299–302.

4. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 1 (New York, 1881), 7–8.

5. Mary R. Beard, *Woman as Force in History: A Study in Traditions and Realities* (New York, 1946), 59–60.

6. For one of the rare ones, see Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959).

7. Gerda Lerner, "Placing Women in History: Definitions and Challenges," *Feminist Studies* 3 (1975): 5–14; reprinted in Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (New York, 1979), 145–59.

8. Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2005); Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (New York, 1968); Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom's Sake: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (Athens, Ga., 1999). Learn why the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights in Oakland, Calif., took her name and see one of the many biographical accounts available on the web, http://ellabaker-center.org/.

9. Johnny Faragher and Christine Stansell, "Women and Their Families on the Overland Trail to California and Oregon, 1842—1867," *Feminist Studies* 2 (1975): 150–66; Omar S. Valerio-Jiménez, "New Avenues for Domestic Dispute and Divorce Lawsuits along the U.S. Mexico Border, 1832–1893," *Journal of Women's History* 21 (Spring 2009): 10–33.

10. Joan Wallach Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91 (Dec. 1986): 1053–75.

11. *Muller v. Oregon*, 208 US 412.

12. Joanne J. Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002).

13. For an overview, see John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, 2012).

14. Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140 (1989): 139–67; Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43 (July 1991): 1241–99; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs* 17 (Winter 1992): 251–74.

15. Martha Minow, "The Supreme Court—1986 Term. Foreword: Justice Engendered," *Harvard Law Review* 101 (1987): 13. Minow points out that "'minority' itself is a relative term. . . . Only in relation to white Westerners are [people of color] minorities."

16. *Equal Employment Opportunities Commission v. Rhode Island*, 549 F. Suppl. 60, 66 (1982).

17. Statistics on these matters are reliably kept by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OCED), a nonprofit sponsored by thirty-four developed countries that collaborate in comparing common policy experiences and identifying good practices. In 2014, the OCED reported that US women spend an average of 126 minutes per day in routine housework; men spend 82 minutes. See http://www.oecd.org/gender/data/balancingpaidworkunpaidworkandleisure.htm.

18. "Pay Equity & Discrimination"; "The Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession, 2017–18" (Washington, D.C.: American Association of University Professors, March 2018), 9–10, https://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/ARES_2017-18.pdf.

19. Linda Gordon, quoted in Nancy F. Cott, "What's in a Name? The Limits of 'Social Feminism'; or, Expanding the Vocabulary of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 76 (Dec. 1989): 826.

Women's America

Refocusing the Past

PART I

EARLY AMERICA

1600–1800

Gender Frontiers

KATHLEEN M. BROWN

The Anglo-Indian Gender Frontier

The first American women were Native American women. The religious, economic, and political roles that they played in their own societies prior to the arrival of Europeans indicate that Europeans and Native Americans held dramatically different ideas about what women and men should be and should do. The difficulties that Europeans had in understanding the alternative gender realities to which they were exposed tell us how strong the impulse is to view established gender definitions in one's own culture as natural rather than socially constructed. Kathleen M. Brown calls this chasm of understanding a "gender frontier." How did Pocahontas and her father, Powhatan, try to cross those divides to reach common understandings or alliances? If you were assigned to do research in the vast area of Indian women and gender relations before and during contact with visiting and colonizing Europeans, what questions and sources would you pursue?

On a January evening in London in 1617, Pocahontas, daughter of a powerful Virginia *werowance* (paramount chief), sat in attendance with James I and Queen Anne to watch the pageantry of Ben Jonson's masque *The Vision of Delight* unfold. Pocahontas had traveled a long way for this performance. Nine years earlier, as a young girl, she had participated in the first Anglo-Indian contact on the mainland the English called "Virginia." Now, as an adult, she continued the encounter by traveling to London with an entourage of Algonquian-speaking Indians. After making a favorable impression on their royal hosts, the Virginia Algonquians had been invited to join the annual Twelfth Night festivities. One Virginia Company investor noted that Pocahontas and her [male] Indian escort Uttamatomakkin were "well placed" at the masque, meaning that they were not only well positioned for viewing the spectacle but could easily be seen by other spectators. Seated next to the king and queen, the two visitors became part of the glittering display presented to other guests on this evening of costumed entertainment.[1]

Part of the appeal of Pocahontas for curious London notables was her reputed transformation to English gentility. The daughter of an Indian werowance . . . [and] a recent convert to Christianity, Pocahontas had relinquished her Indian name, Matoaka, and taken the new name Rebecca. She also spoke English, impressing her hosts with her fluency. Her marriage to Englishman John Rolfe and the birth of their son completed her [perceived] conversion. . . .

In contrast to Pocahontas, Uttamatomakkin, the trusted councillor of her father who accompanied her to the masque, retained

Excerpted and slightly revised by the author from "The Anglo-Algonquian Gender Frontier" by Kathleen M. Brown in *Negotiators of Change: Historical Perspectives on Native American Women*, ed. Nancy Shoemaker (London, 1995), 26–48, and chap. 2 of *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1996). Reprinted by permission of the author and publishers. Notes have been edited and renumbered.

his Indian dress and stubbornly refused to give ground in conversations with English ministers about Christian theology. He remained a skeptic about English symbols of royal authority, moreover, and persisted in judging the English by Indian standards of generosity in gift giving. When James I failed to offer a gift at their meeting, Uttamatomakkin doubted that he was king of the English. . . . Uttamatomakkin was appalled that James lacked the manners and wealth to treat visiting strangers appropriately. When he returned to Virginia, he fulminated against the shortcomings of the English.[2]

With their visit to London in 1616–1617, Pocahontas and Uttamatomakkin traveled along an Anglo-Indian gender frontier they had actively participated in making. During the early English voyages to Roanoake and Jamestown Island, English male adventurers, accompanied by few English women, confronted Indian men and women in their native land. In this cultural encounter, the gender performances of Virginia Algonquians challenged English gentlemen's assumptions about the naturalness of their own gender identities. In the responses of both groups to the other came exchanges, new cultural forms, discoveries of common ground, painful deceptions, bitter misunderstandings, and bloody conflicts.[3]

In both Indian and English societies, differences between men and women were critical to social order. Ethnic identities formed along this "gender frontier," the site of creative and destructive processes resulting from the confrontations of culturally-specific manhoods and womanhoods. In the emerging Anglo-Indian struggle, gender symbols and social relations signified claims to power. Never an absolute barrier, however, the gender frontier also produced sources for new identities and social practices.[4]

In this essay, I explore in two ways the gender frontier that evolved between English settlers and the indigenous peoples of Virginia's tidewater. First, I assess how differences in gender roles shaped the perceptions and interactions of both groups. Second, I analyze the "gendering" of the emerging Anglo-Indian power struggle. [As we will see,] while the English depicted themselves as warriors dominating a feminized native population, Indian women and men initially refused to acknowledge [these] claims to military supremacy, treating the foreigners as they would subject peoples, cowards, or servants. When English warrior discourse became unavoidable, however, Indian women and men attempted to exploit what they saw as the warrior's obvious dependence upon others for the agricultural and reproductive services that ensured group survival.

The indigenous peoples who engaged in this struggle were residents of Virginia's coastal plain [or tidewater], a region of fields, forests, and winding rivers that extended from the shores of the Chesapeake Bay to the mountains and waterfalls near present-day Richmond. Many were affiliated with Powhatan, the werowance who had consolidated several distinct groups under his influence at the time of contact with the English. Most were Algonquian-speakers whose distant cultural roots in the Northeast distinguished them from peoples further south and west where native economies depended more on agriculture and less on hunting and fishing.[5] . . .

English gender differences manifested themselves in relationships to property, ideals for conduct, and social identities. Using plow agriculture, rural Englishmen cultivated grain while women oversaw household production, including gardening, dairying, brewing, and spinning. Women also constituted a flexible reserve labor force, performing agricultural work when demand for labor was high, as at harvest time. While Englishmen's property ownership formed the basis of their political existence and identity, most women did not own property [unless] they were no longer subject to a father or husband.[6]

. . . Early seventeenth-century advice-book authors enjoined English women . . . to maintain a modest demeanor. Publicly punishing shrewish and sexually aggressive women, communities enforced this standard of wifely submission as ideal and of wifely domination as intolerable. The sexual activity of poor and unmarried women proved particularly threatening to community order; these "nasty wenches" provided pamphleteers with a foil for the "good wives" female readers were urged to emulate.[7] How did one know an English good wife when one saw one? Her body and head would be modestly covered. The tools of her work, such as the skimming ladle used in dairying, the distaff of the spinning wheel, and the butter churn reflected her domestic production.

Advice-book authors described men's "natural" domain as one of authority derived from his primary economic role. A man's economic assertiveness, mirrored in his authority over wife, child and servant, was emblematized by the plow's penetration of the earth, the master craftsman's ability to shape his raw materials, and the rider's ability to subdue his horse. Although hunting and fishing supplemented the incomes of many Englishmen, formal group hunts . . . remained the preserve of the aristocracy and upper gentry.

The divide between men's and women's activities described by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century authors did not capture the flexibility of gender relations in most English communities. Beliefs in male authority over women and in the primacy of men's economic activities sustained a perception of social order even as women marketed butter, cheese and ale, and cuckolded unlucky husbands.

Gender roles and identities were also important to the Algonquian speakers whom the English encountered along the three major tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay. Like indigenous peoples throughout the Americas, Virginia Algonquians invoked a divine division of labor to explain and justify differences between men's and women's roles on earth. . . . Tidewater Indians described several creator gods, including a malevolent deity named Okeus, who appeared to worshippers as a hunter-warrior. With the right side of his head shaved so that hair would not catch in his bowstring and the left side grown long—a style adopted by Indian men—Okeus epitomized the virility of the Indian bowman.[8]

Although the English collected little information about female deities from the Indian men they questioned, they did take note of at least one goddess. The Patawomeck werowance Iopassus described a divine woman who lived along the road traveled by dead Indians as they approached the home of their creator, a giant hare god. She "hath alwaies her doores open for hospitality," related Iopassus, "and hath at all tymes ready drest greene *Uskatahomen* and *Pokahichary*," an Indian delicacy made from bruised unripe corn and walnut milk. The consummate Indian hostess, this goddess provided "all manner of pleasant fruicts" and stood in "readines to entertayne all such as do travell to the great hares howse." For the Patawomecks and perhaps for other Virginia Algonquians as well, goddesses set the standard for gracious entertainment and unlimited hospitality.[9]

. . . Indian women's tasks centered on cultivating and processing corn, which provided up to 75 percent of the calories consumed by residents of the coastal plain. In addition, women grew squash, peas, and beans and tended the fires needed for cooking stews and cakes. Women also were responsible for providing much of the material culture of daily life, including clothing, jewelry, and domestic tools and furnishings like pots, baskets, and bedding. Indian women appear to have been active in housebuilding. Their practice of maintaining their own homes, providing kinsmen with basic household necessities, transporting belongings, and building winter houses makes it likely that women provided much of the labor of household construction.[10] . . . Bearing and raising children and mourning the dead rounded out the range of female duties. All were spiritually united by life-giving and its association with earth and agricultural production, sexuality and reproduction. Lineage, wealth, and political power passed through the female line. Among certain peoples, women may also have had the power to determine the fate of captives, the nugget of truth in the much-embellished tale of Pocahontas's intervention on behalf of Captain John Smith.[11]

Indian women were responsible not only for reproducing the traditional features of their culture, but for much of its adaptive capacity as well. As agriculturalists, women . . . had great influence over decisions to move to new grounds, to leave old grounds fallow, and to initiate planting. As producers and consumers of vital household goods and implements, women may have been among the first to feel the impact of new technologies, commodities, and trade. . . .

Indian men assumed a range of responsibilities that complemented those of women. Men cleared new planting grounds of trees. During the spring and summer months, they periodically left villages to fish and hunt, providing highly valued protein. After the final corn harvest, whole villages traveled with their hunters to provide support throughout the winter. Women carried furnishings, cooking implements, and other belongings, setting up temporary winter headquarters. Men's pursuit of game shaped the rhythms of village life during these cold months, just as women's

cultivation of crops determined feasts and the allocation of labor during the late spring and summer.[12]

Indian men's social and work roles became distinct from women's at the moment of the *huskanaw*—a male rite of passage—and remained so until the men were too old to hunt or go to war. Young boys chosen by priests to participate in the ceremonial test of manhood endured a physical and psychological trial of several weeks. The English were under the impression that many boys did not survive the ordeal in the woods, which may have included the near-starvation, drug-induced hallucinations, and frequent beatings that later-seventeenth-century observers described. Those who withstood the journey's harrowing approximation of social and physical death began their lives as men with all memories ritually (if not actually) erased. . . . Women attended these ceremonies carrying funeral accoutrements and mourning loudly for the "death" of their young boys. Men departed from the event "merily," having witnessed the ritual male birthing of a new generation of hunters and warriors.[13]

During the prime of manhood, . . . men continued to live in households with women and children. Higher-status men, including local werowances, were recorded by English men as eating separately from the women of the household. In extremely wealthy homes, such as those of polygynous regional werowances, women served meals to seated men. When ordinary men needed to adopt a more virile identity, they may have slept away from women and children, even leaving the village. By ritually separating themselves from women through sexual abstinence, hunters periodically became warriors, taking revenge for killings or initiating their own raids. This adult leave-taking reenacted the separation celebrated in the huskanaw, in which young boys left their mothers' homes to become men.[14]

Men's hunting and fighting were associated with life-taking, with its ironic relationship to the life-sustaining acts of procreation, protection, and provision. Whereas earth and corn symbolized women, the weapons of the hunt, the trophies taken from the hunted, and the predators of the animal world represented men. Men displayed their status as hunters by wearing bucks' antlers on their heads, claw earrings, bears' teeth necklaces, and snake and weasel skin headdresses. The ritual use of *pocones*, a blood-colored dye, also reflected this gender division. Women anointed their bodies with pocones for sexual encounters and ceremonies celebrating the harvest; men wore it during hunting, warfare, or the ritual celebrations of successes in these endeavors.[15] . . .

The exigencies of the winter hunt, the value placed on meat, and intermittent warfare among native peoples may have been the foundation of male dominance in politics and religious matters. Women were not without their bases of power in Algonquian society, however; their important roles as agriculturalists, reproducers of Indian culture, and caretakers of lineage property kept gender relations in rough balance. Indian women's ability to choose spouses motivated men to be "paynefull" in their hunting and fishing. These same men warily avoided female spaces in which menstruating women may have gathered. By no means equal to men, whose political and religious decisions directed village life, Indian women were perhaps more powerful in their subordination than English women.[16]

Even before the English sailed up the river they renamed the James, however, Indian women's power may have been waning, eroded by Powhatan's chiefdom-building tactics. A "goodly old-man, not yet shrincking," with gray hair and weather-beaten-skin, Powhatan was probably in his seventies when the English met him. During the last quarter of the sixteenth century, perhaps as a consequence of early Spanish forays into the region, he began to add to his inherited chiefdom, coercing and manipulating other coastal residents into economic and military alliances. Powhatan also subverted the matrilineal transmission of political power by appointing his kinsmen to be werowances of villages recently consolidated into his chiefdom. The central military force under his command created opportunities for male recognition in which acts of bravery, rather than matrilineal property or political inheritance, determined privileges. . . . Powhatan extracted tribute for promised protection or non-aggression [from subordinate leaders]. He was thus appropriating corn, the product of women's labor, from the villages he dominated. He also communicated power and wealth through conspicuous displays of young wives. Through marriages to women drawn from villages throughout his chiefdom, Powhatan emblematized his dominance over the margins of his domain

and created kinship ties to strengthen his influence over these villages. With the arrival of the English, the value of male warfare and the symbolism of corn as tribute only intensified, further strengthening the patriarchal tendencies of Powhatan's people.[17]

Conquest seemed justifiable to many English because Native Americans had failed to tame the wilderness according to English standards. Writers claimed they found "only an idle, improvident, scattered people . . . carelesse of anything but from hand to mouth." Most authors compounded impressions of sparse indigenous populations by listing only numbers of fighting men, whom they derided as impotent for their failure to exploit the virgin resources of the "bowells and womb of their Land." The seasonal migration of native groups and the corresponding shift in diet indicated to the English a lack of mastery over the environment, reminding them of animals. John Smith commented, "It is strange to see how their bodies alter with their diet; even as the deare and wild beastes, they seem fat and leane, strong and weak."[18] . . .

Implicit in all these commentaries was a critique of indigenous men for failing to fulfill the responsibility of economic provision with which the English believed all men to be charged. Lacking private property in the English sense, Indian men . . . appeared to the English to be feminine and not yet civilized to manliness.[19] . . .

English commentators reacted with disapproval to seeing [native] women perform work relegated to laboring men in England while Indian men pursued activities associated with the English aristocracy. Indian women, George Percy claimed, "doe all their dru[d]gerie. The men takes their pleasure in hunting and their warres, which they are in continually." Observing that the women were heavily burdened and the men only lightly so, John Smith similarly noted "the men bestowe their times in fishing, hunting, wars and such manlike exercises, scorning to be seene in any woman like exercise," while the "women and children do the rest of the worke." Smith's account revealed his discomfort with women's performance of work he considered the most valuable.[20]

The English were hard pressed to explain other Indian behavior without contradicting their own beliefs in the natural and divinely-sanctioned characteristics of men and women. Such was the case with discussions of Indian women's pain during childbirth. . . . Many English writers claimed that Indian women gave birth with little or no pain. Their relatively easy labor appeared to contradict Judeo-Christian traditions in which all women, as products of an original and single divine creation, paid for the sins of Eve. The belief that indigenous women were closer to nature than English women—which implied that English women had labor pains because they were civilized—allowed the English to regard Indian women . . . as exempt from Eve's curse.[21]

The English were both fascinated and disturbed by other aspects of Native American society through which gender identities were communicated, including hairstyle, dress, and make-up. The native male fashion of going clean-shaven, for example, clashed with English associations of beards with male political and sexual maturity, diminishing Indian men's claims to manhood in the eyes of the English. . . . It probably did not enhance English respect for Indian manhood that female barbers sheared men's facial hair.[22]

Most English writers found it difficult to distinguish between the sexual behavior of Chesapeake dwellers and what they viewed as sexual potency conveyed through dress and ritual. English male explorers were particularly fascinated by indigenous women's attire, which seemed scanty and immodest compared to English women's multiple layers and wraps. . . . Several writers commented that Native Americans "goe altogether naked," or had "scarce to cover their nakednesse." Smith claimed, however, that the women were "alwaies covered about their midles with a skin and very shamefast to be seene bare." Yet he noted, as did several other English travelers, the body adornments, including beads, paintings, and tattoos, that were visible on Indian women's legs, hands, breasts, and faces. Perhaps some of the "shamefastness" reported by Smith resulted from Englishmen's close scrutiny of Indian women's bodies.[23]

. . . The gendering of Anglo-Indian relations in English writing was not without contest and contradiction, nor did it lead inevitably to easy conclusions of English dominance. Englishmen incorporated Indian ways into their diets and military tactics, and Indian women into their sexual lives. . . . Colonial

Carolina Algonquin woman, drawing by John White, 1585.
This portrait of an Algonquin woman was drawn at her home settlement during the summer of 1585 by John White, the official artist of the English expedition to Roanoke. His drawings are rare representations of Algonquin life before extensive European contact. The woman, who looks skeptically at the viewer, is the wife of a leading male chief or counselor. Her body is decorated with gray, brown, and blue tattoos on the face, neck, arms, and legs. Women's tattoos simulated elaborate necklaces and other ornamentation; men used body paint for ceremonial purposes. (Courtesy of the British Museum. See also Paul Hulton, America 1585: The Complete Drawings of John White *[Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press and British Museum Publications, 1984].)*

domination was a complex process involving sexual intimacy, cultural incorporation, and self-scrutiny. . . .

Misunderstandings shaped the Indian-Anglo power struggle. For example, Indian assumptions about masculinity may have led Powhatan to over-estimate the vulnerability of Smith's men. The [first] gentlemen and artisans to arrive in Virginia proved to be dismal farmers, remaining wholly dependent upon native corn stores during their first three years and partially dependent thereafter. The English tried to persuade Indians to grow more corn to meet their needs, but their requests were greeted with scorn by Indian men who found no glory in the "woman-like exercise" of farming. Perhaps believing that the male settlement would always require another population to supply it, Powhatan tried to use the threat of starvation to level the playing field with the English. During trade negotiations with Smith in January 1609, Powhatan held out for guns and swords, claiming disingenuously that corn was more valuable to him than copper trinkets because he could eat it.[24] . . .

Indian women were [at times] . . . successful in manipulating Englishmen's desires for sexual intimacy. At the James River village of Appocant in late 1607, the unfortunate George Cawson met his death when village women "enticed [him] up from the barge into their howses." Oppossunoquonuske, a clever *werowansqua* of another village, similarly led fourteen Englishmen to their demise. Inviting the unwary men to come "up into her Towne, to feast and make Merry," she convinced them to "leave their Armes in their boat, because they said how their women would be afrayd ells of their pieces."[25]

Although both of these accounts are cautionary tales that represent Indians literally as feminine seducers capable of entrapping Englishmen in the web of their own sexual desires, the incidents suggest Indian women's canny assessment of the men who would be colonial conquerors. Exploiting Englishmen's hopes for colonial pleasures, Indian women dangled before them the opportunity for sexual intimacy, turning a female tradition of sexual hospitality into a weapon of war. Acknowledging the capacity of English "pieces" to terrorize Indian women, Oppossunoquonuske tacitly recognized Englishmen's dependence on their guns to construct self-images of bold and masculine conquerors. Her genius lay in convincing them to rely on other masculine "pieces." When she succeeded in getting Englishmen to set aside one colonial masculine identity—the warrior—for another—the lover of native women—the men were easily killed. . . .

. . . Algonquians tried to maneuver the English into positions of political subordination. Smith's account of his captivity, near-execution, and rescue by Pocahontas [in winter 1607–08] was undoubtedly part of an adoption ritual in which Powhatan defined his relationship to Smith as one of patriarchal dominance. Smith became Powhatan's prisoner after warriors easily slew his English companions and then "missed" with nearly all of the twenty or thirty arrows they aimed at Smith himself. Clearly, Powhatan wanted Smith brought to him alive. Smith reported that during his captivity he was offered "life, libertie, land and women," prizes Powhatan must have believed to be very attractive to Englishmen, in exchange for information about how best to capture Jamestown. After ceremonies and consultations with priests, Powhatan brought Smith [then age 28] before an assembly where, Smith later claimed, Pocahontas [who was about 12 years old] risked her own life to prevent him from being clubbed to death by executioners. It seems that Smith understood neither the ritual adoption taking place nor the significance of Powhatan's promise to make him a werowance and to "for ever esteeme him as [he did] his son Nantaquoud."[26]

After returning Smith to Jamestown, Powhatan showered him with gifts of food and entreaties to take up his kingdom as a subordinate werowance. Although interested in both the land and the corn, Smith wanted to avoid making gestures of obeisance. Upon a subsequent visit to Powhatan, the werowance assured Smith he would receive his due but that "he expected to have all these [Smith's] men lay their armes at his feet, as did his subjects." Smith demurred at the implied subordination, claiming that only an enemy of the English would expect them to disarm. Powhatan repeated his offer to Smith, urging the adoptive relationship upon him. Pronouncing him "a werowanes of Powhatan, and that all his subjects should so esteeme us," Powhatan integrated Smith and his men into his own chieftancy, declaring "no man account us strangers nor Paspaheghans, but Powhatans, and that

the Corne, weomen and Country, should be to us as to his owne people."[27] . . .

But Smith rejected Powhatan's claims to benevolent fatherhood. . . . [His rejection, and the cultural chasm between him and the Powhatans, became clear] much later, during Smith's final conversation with Pocahontas in 1617. Having been in England for nearly six months, Pocahontas was surprised to see Smith for the first time only near the end of her stay. According to Smith's account, she upbraided him for his rudeness and failure to reciprocate the hospitality the Algonquians had shown him. After "remembr[ing] [Smith] well what courtesies shee had done," she focused on Smith's betrayal of her father. "You did promise Powhatan what was yours should bee his, and he the like to you," Smith recalled her saying. "You called him father being in his land a stranger, and by the same reason so must I doe you." . . . Pocahontas noted that Smith had failed to [welcome and host] her, a stranger to his land, [as] her father had done for him. Also, he had reneged on his promise to share with Powhatan all that was his.[28] . . .

With false modesty and calculated deference, Smith [protested] that a king's daughter should call him father. Pocahontas responded angrily, taunting Smith, asking him how it was that in the safety of his own country he should fear being called father when he had shown no qualms about invading Powhatan's country, causing "feare in him and all his people (but mee)." Pocahontas insisted: "I tell you then I will [call you father], and you shall call mee childe, and so I will bee for ever and ever your Countrieman." With this remark, Pocahontas recast the politics and the meaning of her conversion to Englishness. No longer simply the adoption of a new language, strange religion, and foreign manners, Pocahontas's transformation implied mutual obligations that originated with the promises exchanged by Powhatan and Smith. She interpreted her Englishness as a consequence of the relationship between the two men, through which Smith as well as the daughter of Powhatan should have been transformed.[29]

Despite her fashionable English dress and hat, Pocahontas held Smith to an Indian standard of reciprocity and exchange. By transferring the burden of obligation to Smith, she challenged depictions of Powhatan's daughter as indebted to the English for the gift of civilization. Her words, undoubtedly altered somewhat by the self-serving Smith, nonetheless suggest that her own view of her conversion was considerably more complicated than either Smith or the Virginia Company would ever understand.

The first decade of encounter between English and Indian peoples wrought changes in the gender relations of both societies. Contact bred trade, political reshuffling, sexual intimacy, and warfare, [and, for the indigenous, unfamiliar illnesses and a spike in deaths due to diseases spread by Europeans]. The very process of confrontation between two groups with male-dominated political and religious systems initially may have strengthened the value of patriarchy for each.

The rapid change in Indian life and culture had a particularly devastating impact upon women. Many women, whose office it was to bury and mourn the dead, may have been relegated to perpetual grieving. Corn was also uniquely the provenance of women; economically it was the source of female authority, and religiously and symbolically they were identified with it. The wanton burning and pillaging of corn supplies, through which the English transformed their dependence into domination, may have represented to indigenous residents an egregious violation of women.

English dominance in the region [especially after 1644] ultimately led to the decline of the native population and its way of life. As a consequence of war, nutritional deprivation, and disease, Virginia Indians were reduced in numbers from the approximately 14,000 inhabitants of the Chesapeake Bay and tidewater in 1607 to less than 3,000 by the early eighteenth century. White settlement forced tidewater dwellers farther west, rupturing the connections between ritual activity, lineage, and geographic place. [Indigenous] priests lost credibility as traditional medicines failed to cure new diseases, while confederacies such as Powhatan's declined and disappeared. Uprooted tidewater peoples also encountered opposition from piedmont [inland] inhabitants upon whose territory they encroached. Ironically, the destruction of Powhatan's carefully nurtured political institutions and of Indian societies themselves opened up opportunities for individual women to assume leadership over tribal remnants by the mid-seventeenth century.[30]

The English, meanwhile, emerged from these early years of settlement with gender roles more explicitly defined in English, Christian, and yeoman terms. This core of English identity proved remarkably resilient, persisting through seventy years of wars with neighboring Indians and continuing to evolve as English settlers imported Africans to work the colony's tobacco fields. Initially serving to legitimate the destruction of traditional Indian ways of life, this concept of Englishness ultimately constituted one of the most powerful legacies of the Anglo-Indian gender frontier.

NOTES

1. Philip L. Barbour, *Pocahontas and Her World: A Chronicle of America's First Settlement* (Boston, 1970), 175–176, 179.

2. John Smith, *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles . . .* (1624), in *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith (1580–1631)*, ed. Philip L. Barbour, 3 vols. (Chapel Hill, NC, 1986) (hereafter, *CWJS*), II, 261.

3. For "performances" as used here, see Judith Butler, "Gender Trouble," in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda J. Nicholson (New York, 1990), 336–339.

4. For analyses of economic, linguistic, and religious "frontiers," see James Merrell, "'The Customes of Our Country': Indians and Colonists in Early America," in *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Phillip D. Morgan (Chapel Hill, NC, 1991), 117–156. In no way separate or distinct, the gender frontier infiltrated other frontiers we usually describe as economic, social, or cultural. See Kathleen M. Brown, "Brave New Worlds: Women's and Gender History," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 50 (April 1993), 311–328.

5. See, for example, Ben C. McCary, *Indians in Seventeenth Century Virginia* (Williamsburg, VA, 1957); Helen C. Rountree, *The Powhatan Indians of Virginia: Their Traditional Culture* (Norman, OK, 1989), 17–31, 151–152; Helen C. Rountree, *Pocahontas's People: The Powhatan Indians of Virginia through Four Centuries* (Norman, OK, 1990); G. Melvin Herndon, "Indian Agriculture in the Southern Colonies," *North Carolina Historical Review* 44 (1967), 283–297; and Nancy Oestreich Lurie, "Indian Cultural Adjustment to European Civilization," in *Seventeenth-Century America: Essays in Colonial History*, ed. James Morton Smith (Chapel Hill, NC, 1959), 40–42. The groups under Powhatan's mantle of authority included the Pamunkey, Kecoughtan, Mattaponi, Appamattuck, Rappahannock, Piankatank, Chiskiack, Werowocomoco, Nansemond, and Chesapeake.

6. Among the most useful accounts of English agriculture are Joan Thirsk, ed., *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, 6 vols. (Cambridge, 1967), vol. 4; K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the Laboring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England, 1660–1900* (Cambridge, 1985); and Ann Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1981).

7. See Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (New York, 1988), ch. 2; William Gouge, *Domesticall Duties* (London, 1622); Richard Brathwait, *The English Gentlewoman* (London, 1631); Gervase Markham, *Country Contentments or the English Housewife* (London, 1623). For the terms "good wives" and "nasty wenches," see John Hammond, *Leah and Rachel, or the Two Fruitfull Sisters* (London, 1656).

8. Smith, *Generall Historie*, in *CWJS*, II, 121–125; William Strachey, *The Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania*, ed. Louis B. Wright and Virginia Freund (London, 1953), 89, 103 (hereafter, *HTVB*); Rountree, *Powhatan Indians*, 135–138; Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville, TN, 1976), 148–149.

9. *HTVB*, 103. The dearth of information about female goddesses may have resulted from the relative uninterest of English Protestants and their habit of talking mainly to Indian men.

10. Edwin Randolph Turner III, "An Archaeological and Ethnohistorical Study on the Evolution of Rank Societies in the Virginia Coastal Plain" (Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 1976), 182–187; Rountree, *Powhatan Indians*, 45–54, 63–65, 90; Rountree, *Pocahontas's People*, 88. For primary accounts of Algonquian agriculture and women's work, see Henry Spelman, *Relation of Virginea*, in *Travels and Works of Captain John Smith*, ed. Edward Archer and A. G. Bradley, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1910) (hereafter *TWJS*), I, cvii, cxi–cxii; and John Smith, *Map of Virginia . . .*, in *CWJS*, I, 157–159.

11. Rountree, *Powhatan Indians*, 84, 86, 88 n. 2.

12. Smith, *Generall Historie*, in *CWJS*, II, 118, 178; *HTVB*, 81; Spelman, *Relation of Virginea*, in *TWJS*, I, cvii; Rountree, *Powhatan Indians*, 32–35.

13. Smith, *Generall Historie*, in *CWJS*, II, 124–125, 178; Spelman, *Relation of Virginea*, in *TWJS*, I, cvi.

14. Smith, *Generall Historie*, in *CWJS*, II, 124–125; Rountree, *Powhatan Indians*, 88, 94; J. Leitch Wright Jr., *The Only Land They Knew: The Tragic Story of the American Indians in the Old South* (New York, 1981), 8–14; Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 148–156, 258–260.

15. Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 259; Smith, *Generall Historie*, in *CWJS*, II, 147–148, 155.

16. *HTVB*, 83, 84.

17. Ibid., 40, 44, 57 (description of Powhatan), 62, 65–69; Spelman, *Relation of Virginea*, in *TWJS*, I, cxiv.

18. John Smith, *The Proceedings of the English Colony in Virginia . . .* (London, 1612), in *CWJS*, I, 257; *HTVB*, 24; Smith, *Map of Virginia*, in *CWJS*, I, 162–163.

19. V. G. Kiernan, "Private Property in History," in *Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe, 1200–1800*, ed. Jack Goody et al. (Cambridge, 1976), 361–398.

20. George Percy, *Observations by Master George Percy, 1607* (1607), in *Narratives of Early Virginia, 1606–1625*, ed. Lyon Gardiner Tyler (New York, 1907) (hereafter, *NEV*), 18; Smith, *Map of Virginia*, in *CWJS*, II, 162, 164. See also David D. Smits, "'The Squaw Drudge': A Prime Index of Savagism," *Ethnohistory* 29 (1982), 281–306.

21. John Smith, *Description of Virginia and Proceedings of the Colonie* (London, 1612), in *NEV*, 99; Anne Laurence, "The Cradle to the Grave: English Observation of Irish Social Customs in the Seventeenth Century," *The Seventeenth Century* 3 (Spring 1988), 66–75; Jo Murphy-Lawless, "Images of

Poor Women in the Writings of Irish Men Midwives," in *Women in Early Modern Ireland*, ed. Margaret Mac-Curtain and Mary O'Dowd (Edinburgh, 1991), 291–303.

22. Smith, *Generall Historie*, in *CWJS*, II, 173. For the deeper reverberations of different clothing and naming practices, see James Axtell, *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York, 1981), 45, 47–55, 57–60.

23. Smith, *Proceedings of the English Colonies*, in *CWJS*, I, 235–236; Thomas Hariot, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (London, 1588; reprint, New York, 1903), E2–E3; Percy, *Observations*, in *NEV*, 12; Smith, *Map of Virginia*, in *CWJS*, I, 161.

24. Rountree, *Powhatan Indians*, 89; Smith, *Proceedings of the English Colonies*, in *CWJS*, I, 246.

25. *HTVB*, 60, 64.

26. Smith, *True Relation*, in *CWJS*, I, 45; Smith, *Generall Historie*, ibid., II, 147–151.

27. Smith, *True Relation*, in *CWJS*, I, 61–67.

28. Smith, *Generall Historie*, in *CWJS*, II, 260–262.

29. Ibid., 261; Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492–1797* (London, 1986), 146–147, 151–152, 156.

30. Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, ch. 8; Timothy Silver, *A New Face on the Countryside: Indians, Colonists, and Slaves in South Atlantic Forests, 1500–1800* (New York, 1990), 72, 74–83, 87–88, 91, 102; Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (Cambridge, 1986), 195–216; Wright, *Only Land They Knew*, 24–26; Peter Wood, "The Changing Population of the Colonial South," in *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, ed. Peter Wood et al. (Lincoln, NE, 1989), 38, 40–42. See Martha McCartney, "Cockacoeske, Queen of the Pamunkey: Diplomat and Suzeraine," in ibid., 173–195; Robert Steven Grumet, "Sunsquaws, Shamans, and Tradeswomen: Middle Atlantic Coastal Algonkian Women during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Mona Etienne and Eleanor Leacock (New York, 1980), 43–62.

JENNIFER L. MORGAN

"Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulder": Male Travelers, Female Bodies

Of all the women who crossed the Atlantic east to west between 1492 and 1800, four fifths made the journey from African homelands. They were fully one third of the Africans compelled to embark on the infamous Middle Passage. White European women were a small proportion of female migrants—forced or voluntary—because of the insatiable demand of New World planters, especially in Brazil and the Caribbean (then referred to as the West Indies), for laborers to harvest profitable crops like sugar cane. These taskmasters were not averse to using girls and women as laborers.* Thus, while middling-status European women were likely to experience the hope, anxiety, and exhilaration that could come with establishing a homestead in a new land, African women were fated to associate the American continent with severe trauma, ongoing despair, and cultural loss.

The merchant capitalists, investors, and planters who promoted New World colonization had little compunction about subjecting poor, uneducated European working men, women, and children to a host of exploitative, coercive labor systems. But they forced on the eight million Africans carried off in the transatlantic slave trade even more degrading conditions—both on slave ships and on American

* Jennifer L. Morgan, "Slavery and the Slave Trade," in *A Companion to American Women's History*, ed. Nancy A. Hewitt (Malden, MA, 2002), 20–34.

Excerpted from the introduction and chap. 1 of *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* by Jennifer L. Morgan (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). Reprinted by permission of the author and publisher. Notes have been edited and renumbered.

plantations. How did they justify this behavior to themselves? We cannot point simply to racism, because a concept of race as a biologically hereditable set of traits congealed only in the nineteenth century. In the sixteenth century, educated Europeans believed that all humans descended from a common ancestor and thus shared a common humanity. "Race" was used mostly to indicate national origin or lineage. Skin color was not seen as an immutable marker of difference; many believed one's complexion would change according to how close one lived to the equator. Jennifer Morgan's essay forces us to grapple with how Europeans and Africans alike called into being the categories of blackness and whiteness.

To understand the process, Morgan argues, we must pay attention to Europeans' depictions of women's bodies and sexuality in the travel narratives of the time. The narratives' authors, European adventurers of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, can be thought of as early ethnographers in that they engaged in the close description of human cultures. Travelers to Africa borrowed tropes (i.e., significant themes or motifs) from earlier accounts written about indigenous American women. How did European depictions of African women change between the 1550s and the 1770s? Do you agree that these imaginary presentations amounted to "porno-tropical writings"? Does Morgan convince you about their boundary-making power? Morgan's analysis helps us understand not only the impact of these texts and their accompanying pictures on English readers, but also the enduring legacy they created for African and African-descended women and men in the Americas.*

Ideas about black sexuality and misconceptions about black female sexual behavior formed the cornerstone of Europeans' and Euro-Americans' general attitudes toward slavery.[1] Arguably, the sexual stereotypes levied against African-American women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were so powerful because of the depth and utility of their roots. Before they came into contact with enslaved women either in West Africa or on American plantations, slaveowners' images and beliefs about race and savagery were indelibly marked on the women's bodies. . . . For European travelers, both those who settled in the Americas and those who did not, the enslavement of African laborers required a sense of moral and social distance over those they would enslave. They acquired that distance in part through manipulating symbolic representations of African women's sexuality. In so doing, European men gradually brought African women into focus—women whose pain-free reproduction (at least to European men) indicated that they did not descend from Eve and who illustrated their proclivity for hard work through their ability to simultaneously till the soil and birth a child. Such imaginary women suggested an immutable difference between Africans and Europeans, a difference ultimately codified as race. . . .

Prior to their entry onto the stage of New World conquests, women of African descent lived in bodies unmarked by what would emerge as Europe's preoccupation with physiognomy—skin color, hair texture, and facial features presumed to be evidence of cultural deficiency. Not until the gaze of European travelers fell upon them would African women see themselves, or indeed one another, as defined by "racial" characteristics. During the decades after European arrival to the Americas, as various nations gained and lost footholds, followed fairytale rivers of gold, traded with and decimated Native inhabitants, and ignored and mobilized Christian notions of conversion and just wars, English settlers

* A set of the illustrations analyzed by Morgan appears in an earlier version of this essay, "'Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulder': Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500–1770," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 54 (Jan. 1997): 167–92 (accessible online in some college libraries via the database JSTOR).

constructed an elaborate edifice of forced labor on the foundation of emerging categories of race and reproduction. The process of calling blackness into being and causing it to become inextricable from brute labor took place in legislative acts, laws, wills, bills of sale, and plantation inventories just as it did in journals and adventurers' tales of travels. Indeed, the gap between intimate experience (the Africans with whom one lived and worked) and ideology (monstrous, barely human savages) would be bridged in the hearts and minds of prosaic settlers rather than in the tales of worldly adventurers. . . . I turn here to travel narratives to explore developing categories of race and racial slavery. . . .

The connections between forced labor and race became increasingly important. . . . A concept of "race" rooted firmly in biology is primarily a late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century phenomenon. . . . As travelers and men of letters thought through the thorny entanglements of skin color, complexion, features, and hair texture [over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries], they constructed weighty notions of civility, nationhood, citizenship, and manliness on the foundation of the amalgam of nature and culture. Given the ways in which appearance became a trope for civility and morality, it is no surprise to find gender located at the heart of Europeans' encounter with and musings over the connection between bodies and Atlantic economies.

In June 1647, Englishman Richard Ligon left London on the ship *Achilles* to establish himself as a planter in the newly settled colony of Barbados. En route, Ligon's ship stopped in the Cape Verde islands for provisions and trade. There, Ligon saw a black woman for the first time. He recorded the encounter in his *True and Exact History of Barbadoes*: she was a "Negro of the greatest beauty and majesty together: that ever I saw in one woman. Her stature large, and excellently shap'd, well favour'd, full eye'd, and admirably grac'd . . . [I] awaited her comming out, which was with far greater Majesty and gracefulness, than I have seen Queen Anne, descend from the Chaire of State." Ligon's rhetoric must have surprised his English readers, for seventeenth-century images of black women did not usually evoke the monarchy as the referent.[2] . . .

[But] over the course of his journey, Richard Ligon came to another view of black women. He wrote that their breasts "hang down below their Navels, so that when they stoop at their common work of weeding, they hang almost to the ground, that at a distance you would think they had six legs." In this context, black women's monstrous bodies symbolized their sole utility—the ability to produce both crops and other laborers.[3] It is this dual value, sometimes explicit and sometimes lurking in the background of slaveowners' decision-making processes, that would come to define women's experience of enslavement most critically. . . .

As Ligon penned his manuscript while in debtors prison in 1653, he constructed a layered narrative in which the discovery of African women's monstrosity helped to assure the work's success. Taking the female body as a symbol of the deceptive beauty and ultimate savagery of blackness, Ligon allowed his readers to dally with him among beautiful black women, only to seductively disclose their monstrosity over the course of the narrative. Ligon's narrative is a microcosm of a much-larger ideological maneuver that juxtaposed the familiar with the unfamiliar—the beautiful woman who is also the monstrous laboring beast. As the tenacious and historically deep roots of racialist ideology become more evident, it becomes clear also that, through the rubric of monstrously "raced" African women, Europeans found a way to articulate shifting perceptions of themselves as religiously, culturally, and phenotypically superior to the black or brown persons they sought to define. In the discourse used to justify the slave trade, Ligon's beautiful Negro woman was as important as her "six-legged" counterpart. Both imaginary women marked a gendered . . . whiteness on which European colonial expansionism depended. . . .[4]

Travel accounts produced in Europe and available in England provided a corpus from which subsequent writers borrowed freely, reproducing images of Native American and African women that resonated with readers. Over the course of the second half of the seventeenth century, some eighteen new collections with descriptions of Africa and the West Indies were published and reissued in England; by the eighteenth century, more than fifty new synthetic works, reissued again and again, found audiences in England.[5] Both the writers and the readers of these texts learned to dismiss the idea that women in the Americas

and Africa might be innocuous or unremarkable. Rather, indigenous women bore an enormous symbolic burden, as writers from Walter Raleigh to Edward Long used them to mark metaphorically the symbiotic boundaries of European national identities and white supremacy. The conflict between perceptions of beauty and assertions of monstrosity such as Ligon's exemplified a much larger process through which the familiar became unfamiliar, as beauty became beastliness and mothers became monstrous, all of which ultimately buttressed racial distinctions. Writers who articulated religious and moral justifications for the slave trade simultaneously grappled with the character of a contradictory female African body—a body both desirable and repulsive, available and untouchable, productive and reproductive, beautiful and black. By the time an eighteenth-century Carolina slaveowner could look at an African woman with the detached gaze of an investor, travelers and philosophers had already subjected her to a host of taxonomic calculations.

Europe had a long tradition of identifying Others through the monstrous physiognomy or sexual behavior of women. Armchair adventurers might shelve Pliny the Elder's ancient collection of monstrous races, *Historia Naturalis*, which catalogued the long-breasted wild woman, alongside Herodotus's *History*, in which Indian and Ethiopian tribal women bore only one child in a lifetime. They may have read Julian's arguments with Augustine in which he wrote that "barbarian and nomadic women give birth with ease, scarcely interrupting their travels to bear children." . . . Images of female devils included sagging breasts as part of the iconography of danger and monstrosity. The medieval wild woman, whose breasts dragged on the ground when she walked and could be thrown over her shoulder, was believed to disguise herself with youth and beauty in order to enact seductions.[6] . . .

Writers . . . easily applied similar modifiers to Others in Africa and the Americas in order to mark European boundaries. According to *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, "in Ethiopia and in many other countries [in Africa] the folk lie all naked . . . and the women have no shame of the men." Furthermore, "they wed there no wives, for all the women there be common . . . and when [women] have children they may give them to what man they will that hath companied with them." Deviant sexual behavior reflected the breakdown of natural laws—the absence of shame, the inability to identify lines of heredity and descent. This concern with deviant sexuality, articulated almost always through descriptions of women, is a constant theme in the travel writings of early modern Europe. . . . Indeed, Columbus used his reliance on the female body to articulate the colonial venture at the very outset of his voyage when he wrote that the earth was shaped like a breast with the Indies composing the nipple; his urge for discovery of new lands was inextricable from the language of sexual conquest.[7]

Richard Eden's 1553 English translation of Sebastian Münster's *A Treatyse of the Newe India* presented Amerigo Vespucci's 1502 voyage to English readers for the first time. Vespucci did not use color to mark the difference of the people he encountered; rather, he described them in terms of their lack of social institutions ("they fight not for the enlargeing of theyr dominion for asmuch as they have no Magistrates") and social niceties ("at theyr meate they use rude and barberous fashions, lying on the ground without any table clothe or coverlet"). Nonetheless, his descriptions are not without positive attributes, and when he turned his attention to women his language bristled with illuminating contradiction:

> Theyr bodies are verye smothe and clene by reason of theyr often washinge. They are in other thinges fylthy and withoute shame. Thei use no lawful coniunccion of mariage, and but every one hath as many women as him liketh, and leaveth them agayn at his pleasure. The women are very fruiteful, and refuse no laboure al the whyle they are with childe. They travayle in maner withoute payne, so that the nexte day they are cherefull and able to walke. Neyther have they theyr bellies wimpeled or loose, and hanginge pappes, by reason of bearinge manye chyldren.[8]

The passage conveys admiration for indigenous women's strength in pregnancy and their ability to maintain aesthetically pleasing bodies, but it also illustrates the conflict at the heart of European discourse on gender and difference. It hinges on both a veiled critique of European female weakness and a dismissal of Amerindian women's pain. Once English men and women were firmly settled in New World colonies, they too would struggle with the notion of female weakness; they needed both white and black women for hard manual labor, but they also needed to preserve a notion of

white gentlewomen's unsuitability for physical labor. . . .

Despite his respect for female reproductive hardiness, at the end of the volume Vespucci fixed the indigenous woman as a dangerous cannibal:

> There came sodeynly a woman downe from a mountayne, bringing with her secretly a great stake with which she [killed a Spaniard.] The other wommene foorthwith toke him by the legges, and drewe him to the mountayne. . . . The women also which had slayne the yong man, cut him in pieces even in the sight of the Spaniardes, shewinge them the pieces, and rosting them at a greate fyre.

Vespucci later made manifest the latent sexualized danger inherent in the man-slaying woman in a letter in which he wrote of women biting off the penises of their sexual partners, thus linking cannibalism—an absolute indicator of savagery and distance from European norms—to female sexual insatiability.[9]

The label "savage" was not uniformly applied to Amerindian people. Indeed, in the context of European national rivalries, the indigenous woman became somewhat less savage. In the mid to late sixteenth century, the bodies of women figured at the borders of national identities. . . .

In "Discoverie of the . . . Empire of Guiana" (1598), [Sir Walter] Ralegh stated that he "suffered not any man to . . . touch any of [the natives'] wives or daughters: which course so contrary to the Spaniards (who tyrannize over them in all things) drewe them to admire her [English] majestie." Although he permitted himself and his men to gaze upon naked Indian women, Ralegh accentuated the restraint they exercised. In doing so, he used the untouched bodies of Native American women to mark national boundaries and signal the civility and superiority of English colonizers in contrast to the sexually violent Spaniards. Moreover, in linking the eroticism of indigenous women to the sexual attention of Spanish men, Ralegh signaled the Spaniards' "lapse into savagery."[10] . . .

[Visual depictions of Native women were always in flux]. . . . Early volumes of Theodor de Bry's *Grand Voyages* (1590) depicted the Algonkians of Virginia and the Timucuas of Florida as classical Europeans: Amerindian bodies mirrored ancient Greek and Roman statuary, modest virgins covered their breasts, and infants suckled at the high, small breasts of young attractive women. . . .

In the third de Bry volume, *Voyages to Brazil*, published in 1592, the Indian was portrayed as aggressive and savage, and the representation of women's bodies changed. The new woman is a cannibal with breasts that fell below her waist. She licks the juices of grilled human flesh from her fingers. . . . The absence of a suckling child in these . . . depictions . . . signified the women's cannibalism—they consumed rather than produced. Although women alone did not exemplify cannibalism, women with long breasts came to mark such savagery in Native Americans for English readers. As depictions of Native Americans traversed the gamut of savage to noble, the long-breasted women became a clear signpost of savagery in contrast to her high-breasted counterpart.[11] . . .

English travelers to West Africa drew on American narrative traditions as they too worked to establish a clearly demarcated line that would ultimately define them. Richard Hakluyt's collection of travel narratives, *Principal Navigations* (1589), brought Africa into the purview of English readers. *Principal Navigations* portrayed Africa and Africans in both positive and negative terms. . . . In response, Hakluyt presented texts that, through an often-conflicted depiction of African peoples, ultimately differentiated between Africa and England and erected a boundary that made English expansion in the face of confused and uncivilized peoples reasonable, profitable, and moral. . . .[12] [To] write of sex was also to define and expand the boundaries of profit through productive and reproductive labor.

The symbolic weight of indigenous women's sexual, childbearing, and childrearing practices moved from the Americas to Africa and continued to be brought to bear on England's literary imagination in ways that rallied familiar notions of gendered difference for English readers. John Lok's account of his 1554 voyage to Guinea, published forty years later in Hakluyt's collection, . . . described all Africans as "people of beastly living." He located the proof of this in women's behavior: among the Garamantes, women "are common: for they contract no matrimonie, neither have respect to chastitie." This description of the Garamantes first appeared in Pliny, was reproduced again by Iulius Solinus's sixth century *Polyhistor* and can be found in travel accounts through the Middle Ages and into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[13] . . .

William Towrson's narrative of his 1555 voyage to Guinea, also published by Hakluyt in 1589, further exhibits this kind of distillation. Towrson depicted women and men as largely indistinguishable. They "goe so alike, that one cannot know a man from a woman but by their breastes, which in the most part be very foule and long, hanging downe low like the udder of a goate." This was, perhaps, the first time an Englishman in Africa explicitly used breasts as an identifying trait of beastliness and difference. He went on to maintain that "diverse of the women have such exceeding long breasts, that some of them will lay the same upon the ground and lie downe by them."[14] Lok and Towrson represented African women's bodies and sexual behavior in order to distinguish Africa from Europe. Towrson in particular gave readers only two analogies through which to view and understand African women—beasts and monsters. . . .

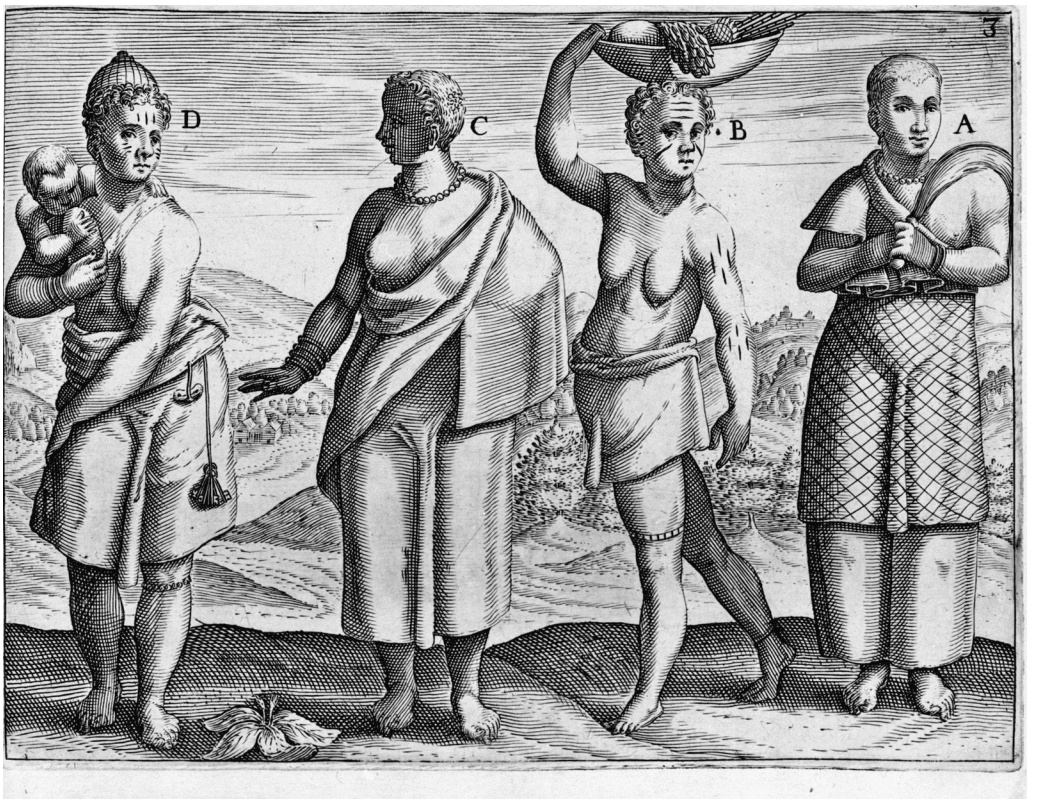
. . . After Hakluyt died, Samuel Purchas took up the mantle of editor and published twenty additional volumes in Hakluyt's series beginning in 1624.[15] . . . [including] a translation of Pieter de Marees's *A description and historicall declaration of the golden Kingedome of Guinea*. This narrative was first published in Dutch in 1602, was translated into German and Latin for the de Bry volumes (1603–1634), and appeared in French in 1605. Plagiarism by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers gave it still wider circulation. Here, too, black women embody African savagery. De Marees began by describing the people at Sierra Leone as "very greedie eaters, and no lesse drinkers, and very lecherous, and theevish, and much addicted to uncleanenesse; one man hath as many wives as hee is able to keepe and maintaine. The women also are much addicted to leacherie, specially, with strange Countrey people . . . [and] are also great Lyers, and not to be credited." As did most of his contemporaries, de Marees invoked women's sexuality to castigate the incivility of both men and women. Women's savagery does not stand apart. Rather, it indicts the whole: all Africans were savage. The passage displays African males' savagery alongside their access to multiple women. Similarly, de Marees located evidence of African women's savagery in their sexual desire. . . .

[He] further castigated West African women: they delivered children surrounded by men, women, and youngsters "in most shamelesse manner . . . before them all." This absence of shame (evoked explicitly, as here, or implicitly in the constant references to nakedness in other narratives) worked to establish distance. Readers, titillated by the topics discussed and thus tacitly shamed, found themselves further distanced from the shameless subject of the narrative. De Marees dwelled on the brute nature of shameless African women. He marveled that "when the child is borne [the mother] goes to the water to wash and make cleane her selfe, not once dreaming of a moneths lying-in . . . as women here with us use to doe; they use no Nurses to helpe them when they lie in childbed, neither seeke to lie dainty and soft. . . . The next day after, they goe abroad in the streets, to doe their businesse."[16] . . .

De Marees goes on to inscribe an image of women's reproductive identity whose influence persisted long after his original publication. "When [the child] is two or three monethes old, the mother ties the childe with a peece of cloth at her backe. . . . When the child crieth to sucke, the mother casteth one of her dugs backeward over her shoulder, and so the child suckes it as it hangs."[17] Frontispieces for the de Marees narrative and the African narratives in de Bry approximate the over-the-shoulder breast-feeding de Marees described, thereby creating an image that could symbolize the continent. . . .

The image, in more or less extreme form, remained a compelling one, offering in a single narrative–visual moment evidence that black women's difference was both cultural (in this strange *habit*) and physical (in this strange *ability*). The word "dug," which by the early seventeenth century meant both a woman's breasts and an animal's teats, connoted a brute animality that de Marees reinforced through his description of small children "lying downe in their house, like Dogges, [and] rooting in the ground like Hogges" and of "boyes and girles [that] goe starke naked as they were borne, with their privie members all open, without any shame or civilitie."[18] . . .

As Englishmen traversed the uncertain ground of nature and culture, African women became a touchstone for physical and behavioral curiosity both within Africa and in the Americas and Europe. Fynes Moryson wrote of Irish women in 1617 that they "have very great Dugges, some so big as they give their children suck over their Shoulders." But it is important that he connects this to being "not



Women in Africa, engraving by Theodor de Bry, 1604.
*Appearing in a much-reproduced travel narrative, this engraving purported to show representative examples of women's clothing and personal decorations in four regions of western Africa. (*Women in Africa, *from* Verum et Historicam Descriptionem Avriferi Regni Guineaa, *in* Small Voyages, *vol. 6, by Theodor de Bry [Frankfurt am Main, 1604], 3. Courtesy of the John Work Garrett Library, Johns Hopkins University.)*

laced at all," or to the lack of corsetry.[19] While nudity—a state in which the absence of corsetry is certainly implicit—is constantly at play in descriptions of African women, the overwhelming physicality of the image is disaggregated from culture and instead becomes part of African female nature; something no amount of corsetry would set right. . . .

African women's Africanness became contingent on the linkages between sexuality and a savagery that fitted them for both productive and reproductive labor. . . . Descriptions of African women in the Americas almost always highlighted their fecundity along with their capacity for manual labor. Erroneous observations about African women's propensity for easy birth and breast-feeding reassured colonizers that these women could easily perform hard labor in the Americas; at the same time, such observations erected a barrier of difference between Africa and England. Seventeenth-century English medical writers, both men and women, equated breast-feeding and tending to children with difficult work, and the practice of wealthy women forgoing breast-feeding in favor of sending their children to wet nurses was widespread. English women and men anticipated pregnancy and childbirth with extreme uneasiness and fear of death, but they knew that the experience of pain in childbirth marked women as members of a Christian community.[20] . . .

. . . By about the turn of the seventeenth century, however, as England joined in the transatlantic slave trade, assertions of African savagery began to be predicated less on consumption and cannibalism and more on production and

reproduction. African women came into the conversation in the context of England's need for productivity. Descriptions of these women that highlighted the apparent ease and indifference of their reproductive lives created a mechanistic image. . . . Whereas English women's reproductive work took place solely in the domestic economy, African women's reproductive work embodied the developing discourses of extraction and forced labor at the heart of England's design for the Americas. . . .

By the eighteenth century, English writers rarely used black women's breasts or behavior for anything but concrete evidence of barbarism in Africa. In *A Description of the Coasts of North and South-Guinea*, begun in the 1680s and completed and published almost forty years later, John Barbot "admired the quietness of the poor babes, so carr'd about at their mothers' backs . . . and how freely they suck the breasts, which are always full of milk, over their mothers' shoulders, and sleep soundly in that odd posture." William Snelgrave introduced his *New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave-trade* with an anecdote designed to illustrate the benevolence of the trade. He described himself rescuing an infant from human sacrifice and reuniting the child with its mother, who "had much Milk in her Breasts." He accented the barbarism of those who had attempted to sacrifice the child and claimed that the reunion cemented his goodwill in the eyes of the enslaved, who, thus convinced of the "good notion of White Men," caused no problems during the voyage to Antigua.[21] . . .

Eighteenth-century abolitionist John Atkins similarly adopted the icon of black female bodies in his writings on Guinea. "Childing, and their Breasts always pendulous, stretches them to so unseemly a length and Bigness that some . . . could suckle over their shoulder." Atkins then considered the idea of African women copulating with apes. He noted that "at some places the Negroes have been suspected of Bestiality." . . . The evidence lay mostly in apes' resemblance to humans but was bolstered by "the Ignorance and Stupidity [of black women unable] to guide or controll lust." Abolitionists and anti-abolitionists alike accepted the connections between race and black women's monstrous and fecund bodies.[22] . . .

The visual shorthand of the sagging-breasted African savage held sway for decades. . . . When William Smith embarked on a voyage to map the Gold Coast for the Royal Africa Company in 1727, he was initially uninterested in ethnography. His first description of people comes more than halfway through the narrative when he writes "but before I describe the Vegetables, I shall take Notice of the Animals of this Country; beginning with the Natives, who are generally speaking a lusty strong-bodied People, but are mostly of a lazy idle Disposition." His short description, followed by a section on "Quadrepedes," is organized primarily around accusations of polygamy and promiscuity in which "hot constitution'd Ladies" are put to work by husbands who treat them like slaves. As the narrative continues, his ethnographic passages, while always brief, are also always organized around sexually available African women. In Whydah, for example, the reader encounters female Priests inclined to whoredom, and he tells of an anomalous Queen in Agonna who satisfies her sexual needs with male slaves, hands down her crown to the resulting female progeny and sells any male children into slavery.[23] . . .

One of a very few English women in late eighteenth-century West Africa, abolitionist Anna Falconbridge . . . noted that women's breasts in Sierra Leone were "disgusting to Europeans, though considered *beautiful* and ornamental here." But such weak claims of sisterly sympathy could hardly interrupt 300 years of porno-tropical writing. By the 1770s, Edward Long's *History of Jamaica* presented readers with African women whose savagery was total, for whom enslavement was the only means of civilization. . . . Long used women's bodies and behavior to justify and promote the mass enslavement of Africans. By the time he wrote, the Jamaican economy was fully invested in slave labor and was contributing more than half of the profits obtained by England from the West Indies as a whole. The association of black people with beasts—via African women—had been cemented: "Their women are delivered with little or no labour; they have therefore no more occasion for midwifes than the female oran-outang, or any other wild animall. . . . Thus they seem exempted from the course inflicted upon Eve *and her daughters*."[24] If African women gave birth without pain, they somehow sidestepped God's curse upon Eve. If they were not Eve's descendants, they were not related to Europeans and could therefore be forced to labor on England's overseas plantations with impunity.[25] . . .

When [Richard] Ligon arrived in Barbados and settled on a 500-acre sugar plantation with 100 slaves, his notion of African beauty—if it had ever really existed—dissolved in the face of racial slavery. He saw African men and women carrying bunches of plantains: "Tis a lovely sight to see a hundred handsom Negroes, men and women, with every one a grasse-green bunch of these fruits on their heads . . . the black and green so well becoming one another." Here in the context of the sugar plantation, where he saw African women working as he had never seen English woman do, Ligon struggled to situate African women as workers. Their innate unfamiliarity as laborers caused him to cast about for a useful metaphor. He compares African people to vegetation; now they are only passively and abstractly beautiful as blocks of color. Ligon attested to their passivity with their servitude: They made "very good servants, if they be not spoyled by the English."[26]

But . . . he ultimately equated black people with animals. He declared that planters bought slaves so that the "sexes may be equall . . . [because] they cannot live without Wives," although the enslaved choose their partners much "as Cows do . . . for, the most of them are as near beasts as may be." Like his predecessors, Ligon offered further proof of Africans' capacity for physical labor—their aptitude for slavery—through ease of childbearing. "In a fortnight [after giving birth] this woman is at worke with her Pickaninny at her back, as merry a soule as any is there."[27] In the Americas, African women's purportedly pain-free childbearing thus continued to be central. When Ligon reinforced African women's animality with descriptions of breasts "hang[ing] down below their Navels," he tethered his narrative to familiar images of black women that—for readers nourished on Hakluyt and de Bry—effectively naturalized the enslavement of Africans. . . .

By the time the English made their way to the West Indies, decades of ideas and information about brown and black women predated the actual encounter. In many ways, the encounter had already taken place in parlors and reading rooms on English soil, assuring that colonists would arrive with a battery of assumptions and predispositions about race, femininity, sexuality, and civilization. Confronted with an Africa they needed to exploit, European writers turned to black women as evidence of a cultural inferiority that ultimately became encoded as racial difference. Monstrous bodies became enmeshed with savage behavior as the icon of women's breasts became evidence of tangible barbarism. African women's "unwomanly" behavior evoked an immutable distance between Europe and Africa on which the development of racial slavery depended. By the mid-seventeenth century, what had initially marked African women as unfamiliar—their sexually and reproductively bound savagery—had become familiar. To invoke it was to conjure a gendered and racialized figure that marked the boundaries of English civility even as she naturalized the subjugation of Africans and their descendants in the Americas.

NOTES

1. Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York, 1985), 29–46; Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650–1838* (Bloomington, IN, 1990), 11–12.

2. Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados* (London, 1657), 12–13.

3. Ligon, *True and Exact History of Barbados*, 51.

4. Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY, 1995), 29–61.

5. Anthony J. Barker, *The African Link: British Attitudes to the Negro in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1550–1807* (London, 1978), 22.

6. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 10 vols., trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA, 1938–63), 2:509–27; Herodotus, *The History*, trans. David Grene (Chicago, 1987), 4, 180, 191; Elizabeth A. Clark, "Generation, Degeneration, Regeneration: Original Sin and the Conception of Jesus in the Polemic between Augustine and Julian of Eclanum," in *Generation and Degeneration: Tropes of Reproduction in Literature and History from Antiquity to Early Modern Europe*, ed. Valeria Finucci and Kevin Brownlee (Durham, NC, 2001), 30; Richard Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages: A Study in Art, Sentiment, and Demonology* (Cambridge, MA, 1952), 33–41, 34.

7. *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville: The Version of the Cotton Manuscript in Modern Spelling*, ed. A. W. Pollard (London: Macmillan, 1915), 109, 119; Sharon W. Tiffany and Kathleen J. Adams, *The Wild Woman: An Inquiry into the Anthropology of an Idea* (Cambridge: Schenkman, 1985), 63.

8. *A Treatyse of the Newe India by Sebastian Münster (1553)*, trans. Richard Eden (microprint) (Ann Arbor, MI, 1966), 57.

9. Münster, *Treatyse*, trans. Eden, quoted in Louis Montrose, "The Work of Gender in the Discourse of Discovery," *Representations* 33 (1991): 1–41, 4, 5.

10. Ralegh, "The Discoverie of the Large Rich and Beautifull Empire of Guiana," in Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation*, 12 vols. (1598–1600; reprint Glasgow,

1903–5), 10, 39; Karen Robertson, "Pocahontas at the Masque," *Signs* 21 (Spring 1996): 561.

11. Theodore de Bry, ed., *Grand Voyages*, 13 vols. (Frankfurt am Main, 1590–1627); Bernadette Bucher, *Icon and Conquest: A Structural Analysis of the Illustrations of de Bry's Great Voyages*, trans. Basia Miller Gulati (Chicago, 1981).

12. Emily C. Bartels, "Imperialist Beginnings: Richard Hakluyt and the Construction of Africa," *Criticism* 34:4 (1992): 517–38, 519.

13. "The second voyage [of Master John Lok] to Guinea . . . 1554," in Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, 6:167, 168; Barker, *African Link*, 121.

14. "The first voyage made by Master William Towrson Marchant of London, to the coast of Guinea . . . in the yeere 1555," in Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, 6:184, 187.

15. Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas His Pilgrimes: Contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Land Travells by Englishmen and Others*, 20 vols. (1624; reprint Glasgow, 1905).

16. De Marees, "Description and Historicall Declaration of the Golden Kingdome of Guinea," in *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, 6:251, 258–59. This testimony to African women's physical strength and emotional indifference is even more emphatic in the original Dutch. In the most recent translation from the Dutch, the passage continues: "This shows that the women here are of a cruder nature and stronger posture than the Females in our Lands in Europe." Pieter de Marees, *Description and Historical Account of the Gold Kingdom of Guinea*, trans. and ed. Albert van Dantzig and Adam Jones (1602; reprint Oxford, 1987), 23.

17. De Marees, "Description and Historicall Declaration of the Golden Kingdome," 259.

18. De Marees, "Description and Historicall Declaration of the Golden Kingdome," 261. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 1989.

19. Fynes Moryson, *Shakespeare's Europe: A Survey of the Condition of Europe at the End of the Sixteenth Century, Being Unpublished Chapters of Fynes Moryson's Itinerary*, 2nd ed. (1617; reprint New York, 1967), 485.

20. Jordan, *White over Black*, 39; Marylynn Salmon, "The Cultural Significance of Breastfeeding and Infant Care in Early Modern England and America," *Journal of Social History* 28 (Dec. 1994): 247–70; Linda Pollock, "Embarking on a Rough Passage: The Experience of Pregnancy in Early Modern Society," in *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England*, ed. Valerie Fildes (New York, 1990), 45.

21. Barbot, "A Description of the Coasts of North and South-Guinea," in *A Collection of Voyages*, ed. A. Churchill (London, 1732), 36; William Snelgrave, "Introduction," in *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave Trade* (1734; reprint London, 1971).

22. John Atkins, *A Voyage to Guinea, Brazil, and the West-Indies* (1735; reprint London, 1970), 50, 108.

23. William Smith, *A New Voyage to Guinea* (London, 1744), 142–43, 195, 208.

24. Anna Maria Falconbridge, "Two Voyages to Sierra Leone, during the Years 1791–2–3," in *Maiden Voyages and Infant Colonies: Two Women's Travel Narratives of the 1790s*, ed. Deirdre Coleman (London, 1999), 45–168, 74, emphasis in the original; Edward Long, "History of Jamaica, 2, with Notes and Corrections by the Author" (1774), Add. Ms., 12405, p364/f295, p380/f304; Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492–1800* (London, 1997), 527–45.

25. Early modern European women were so defined by their experience of pain in childbirth that an inability to feel pain was considered evidence of witchcraft. Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1994), 203–4.

26. Ligon, *True and Exact History of Barbadoes*, 44, 47, 51.

27. Ligon, *True and Exact History of Barbadoes*, 47, 51.

IN BRIEF

Childbirth Practices among North American Indigenous Women (by Ann Marie Plane)

When seventeenth-century European men wrote descriptions of the New World, they often included detailed passages on Indian life. Almost without exception, these authors marveled at the ease of childbirth among the "savages." A native woman went off alone into the forest and returned in a short while with a new baby, resuming her activities as if nothing had happened. Yet, to modern readers, these accounts seem rather incredible. Did Indian women really lie down under any "Bush" or "Tree" that they fancied, as John Josselyn believed? Was native childbirth actually so easy and painless that a woman might be "merry in the House, and delivered and merry againe" in only a quarter of an hour, as Roger Williams wrote?[1] Indeed, would a Pokanoket or a Micmac woman even recognize her experience in the descriptions made by French priests and English gentrymen?

This essay examines these accounts afresh. Although written by men and circumscribed by the literary conventions of the day, these sources do reveal part of the native woman's experience.[2] The scope of my study is limited to the natives of New England and eastern Canada, an area which includes the Narragansett, Massachusett, Nipmuc, Mohegan, Pequot, and Nauset Indians of southeastern New England, and their Abenaki, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Algonquin, Malecite, and Micmac neighbors to the north. Birthing practices may have varied from group to group, especially between the hunting bands of the north and the agricultural peoples to the south.[3] Unfortunately, European authors did not leave sufficient evidence to explore such distinctions. Therefore, while this essay groups these many people together, in no way does it suppose that all native peoples of this vast region found the same meanings in childbirth, or . . . that they . . . shared the same practices. Yet the accounts show that Native American women constructed a different sort of childbirth than their French or English neighbors. While European women would have called four or five female friends over to help during the birth, native women apparently preferred to be alone or attended by only a few people. The required sociability of Euro-Americans, what historians have called "social childbirth," was absent from the native world.[4] To look at the experiences of Amerindian peoples, then, allows the recovery of a piece of the cultural diversity which shaped colonial America.

To understand what Indian women of colonial New England and Canada experienced, we must look at the cultural and environmental factors which made their childbirths different. While not necessarily a medical event, childbirth is

Excerpted and slightly revised from "Childbirth Practices among Native American Women of New England and Canada, 1600–1800," by Ann Marie Plane, in *Medicine and Healing: The Dublin Seminar for New England Folk Life*, edited by Peter Benes (Boston, 1992), 13–24.

certainly a biological one.[5] Anthropologists have described childbirth as a "liminal" experience—a fluid, transitional state which must be processed within each culture by various rites of passage.[6] How did the Amerindian women of New England and eastern Canada experience this liminal period? And how did their beliefs and practices fit within the logic of their cultures? . . .

Following traditional directives for proper diet and care during pregnancy, the Indian mother-to-be continued her daily routines until overcome by active labor. Then she left her village, either alone or in the care of one or two older women. Indian women did not give birth in isolation from their community, even though they may have often been physically separated from the village. In Rhode Island Roger Williams recorded the Narragansett phrases for "She is falling into Travell," "She is in Travell," "She is already delivered," and "She was just now delivered." All of these suggest that the woman's kin kept close tabs on the progress of her labor, even if they themselves were not present. Women usually gave birth in small huts away from the village. A French missionary, Father Le Jeune, remarked that the wife of a male Malecite convert "was delivered of a child alone, and without the assistance of any one. She was confined in the morning, and at noon I saw her working." This woman "had withdrawn into a miserable bark hut, which did not shelter her at all from the wind." While it may have seemed miserable to the French priest, it probably was familiar to the native woman. Like all [area] Indians, Malecite women lived in separate small houses during their menstrual periods.[7] For this reason and others, separate huts were the preferred place of birth.

Because of the nature of the sources, few accounts describe the actual moment of birth. Both infrequent references in the accounts and modern ethnographic data suggest that the birthing woman probably remained in a vertical position—either hanging, standing, kneeling, or squatting.[8] A 1691 description relates that a Micmac woman who had a difficult labor was helped into a hanging position in hopes of hastening the birth. One early twentieth-century narrative, told by a Fox woman, details the use of similar practices by this closely related mid-western Indian group. During her labor her attendant put a strap above her. With each contraction she held on to the strap and sat up on her knees. Many of the European commentators remarked that Indian women did not make noise during labor. . . . Roger Williams noted that most of the Indians "count it a shame for a woman in Travell to make complaint, and many of them are scarcely heard to groane." Indeed, some Europeans thought that Indian women did not even feel pain during birth.[9]

This assumption deserves investigation. One explanation might lie in ethnocentric assumptions by European male observers—and indeed, men had little opportunity to gain direct knowledge of female practices around childbearing. If native women had easier labors, it might have been due to their exceptional physical fitness, small fetal head size, low birthweights, or other physiological factors. Physical anthropologists have demonstrated that overall pelvic size does vary for different human populations. They have also shown the tremendous variety of contingent factors, including diet, disease, and climate that, along with cultural practices, influence birth outcomes.[10] . . . Second, perhaps Indian women had means of relaxation or were not so afraid of childbirth as their European contemporaries.