Katherine Paugh, *The Politics of Reproduction: Race, Medicine, and Fertility in the Age of Abolition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. xi + 263 pp. (Cloth US\$99.00)

Sasha Turner, *Contested Bodies: Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017. viii + 316 pp. (Cloth US\$45.00)

Historians Katherine Paugh and Sasha Turner offer well-researched studies on enslaved women's reproduction in the final six decades of slavery in the British West Indies. Paugh's *The Politics of Reproduction* stresses the evolving scientific, political, and economic contexts of the British Empire to understand changes in the way enslaved women's bodies were viewed, while Turner's *Contested Bodies* grounds its analysis of the reform of enslaved women's sexuality and childrearing practices within a framework of resistance and accommodation.

The Politics of Reproduction demonstrates how reform efforts, influenced by laissez-faire theories, Malthusian trends, and a push for the religious moralization of bondpeople, focused on slave women's reproductive capacities to meet the "political, economic, and ideological needs of British capital" in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (p. 7). Paugh refutes the idea that the abolition of the slave trade was, as many historians have claimed, an "econocide" and argues that ensuring the efficient reproduction of the enslaved labor force was considered economically beneficial to both the colonies and the metropole by many Britons. She supports her three-pronged argument on the role medicine, demographic knowledge, and religion played in the "politics of reproduction" with a compelling microhistory of three generations of Afro-Barbadian bondswomen.

The strength of Paugh's study lies in her constant ideological contextualization in time and space of the politics of reproduction that took place in British Caribbean plantation societies. Beginning with the emergence of a pronatal ideology in the 1770s, she demonstrates how the disturbances of the American and Haitian Revolutions cemented abolitionists' choice of gradual over immediate abolition and forced planters to adhere to the imperial push for demographic reform on the eve of the abolition of the slave trade. A few decades later, the emergence of Malthusian thought in Britain gave credence to changing racialized ideologies of black women's fertility and increased control of their sexuality and reproduction. At the same time, missionary work dedicated to opposing concubinage and promoting Christian marriages further attempted to control the lives of enslaved women on the plantation as they promoted a patriarchal order among enslaved families. Of note, Paugh's analysis of how

Methodist preaching in Barbados reinforced existing hierarchies between free and enslaved blacks highlights the inadequacy of treating race as a monolithic category in slave societies.

Throughout her study, Paugh uses court records and the papers of Newton plantation to demonstrate how the politics of reproduction defined by planters, abolitionists, and British officials played out on the ground. The story of an Afro-Barbadian family begins with the little-known case of *Hylas v. Newton* (1768), during which Mary Hylas's husband, a freedman she met while accompanying her mistress in England, successfully sued her owners for financial compensation after she had returned to Barbados. Predating the *Somerset* case by three years, this case brought attention to the incompatibility between the English law of marriage and the colonial law of slavery. Yet while Mary's husband argued that his wife had been taken away without his consent, Mary seemed to have willingly returned to Barbados, where the children she had previously had with a white man awaited her. Her own mixed-raced ancestry and that of her children conferred on her family an elite status within the plantation. Her daughter Doll became a midwife and, despite the professionalization of obstetrics in the late eighteenth century, managed to take advantage of the disturbances posed by the American Revolution to secure her position over white women of the neighborhood. Unfortunately, the Haitian Revolution threatened the family's privileged position for a period. Notwithstanding this temporary demotion, by the time of Doll's death in 1811, all three of her daughters had found paths to freedom, and male kin had secured skilled positions on the plantation.

Sasha Turner's *Contested Bodies* examines the conflict in Jamaica between metropolitan and local efforts at controlling bondswomen's reproduction and enslaved women's attempts at maintaining power over their fertility and child-rearing practices. Using plantation papers, court records, abolitionist and medical writings, newspapers, and government papers, Turner paints a well-rounded picture of the attempts to control the bodies of enslaved women and their children on both sides of the Atlantic. She demonstrates the complexity of achieving reform in Jamaica as doctors, missionaries, abolitionists, metropolitan and local officials, planters, and bondspeople vied for the best means to reach their own goals. For instance, with the professionalization of obstetrics by white men, doctors often criticized planters' care of their chattel, while bondspeople strongly rejected the intrusion of western medicine in traditional ways of giving birth and caring for infants. Attention to the agency of enslaved women pervades Turner's study. Not only did bondswomen contest outside intrusion into the ways they bore and raised children, but whenever possible, mothers used reform efforts to their advantage and that of their families. As

such, they availed themselves of financial incentives awarded by planters after successful births or familial rights offered by the Church, but also attempted, albeit not often successfully, to use new avenues of legal action.

The originality of *Contested Bodies* lies in the addition of age as a category of analysis as Turner highlights that control over slave women's bodies extended to their children, viewed by planters as the future generation of their labor force and by abolitionists as the upcoming generation of free citizens of the British empire. At the end of the slave trade, the focus on slave children became even more important, since this segment of the population was plagued by the highest mortality rates. Control over enslaved children's wellbeing began at birth, as English doctors pushed new theories regarding breastfeeding, bathing, and clothing that were at odds with planters' financial interests and slaves' traditional childrearing practices. Abolitionists and planters agreed that, once weaned, slave children should be separated from their community to avoid transmission of their parents' inherent vices. The last chapter on raising hard-working adults is particularly compelling, as Turner demonstrates the great flexibility and importance of children's work on sugar estates and shows how skin color and gender affected their position and future on the plantation. She does not forget to highlight their agency, and argues that enslaved children resisted the growing control over their lives by running away and engaging in mischief.

Although *Contested Bodies* is an original, thoroughly researched study, readers may at times be left with the impression that the world of enslaved women and their children was entirely defined by their resistance to bondage and white oppression, since Turner depicts children's agency as limited to running away and sabotaging plantation activity, rather than demonstrating how they actively participated in their families' material wellbeing. When she discusses slave mothers running away with their infants as a form of resistance, she fails to mention that they could only do so because they knew that kin and friends would care for their other children. Her sporadic mentions of the place of slave fathers and the slave community's role in materially supporting parturient women by taking over their work as well as by helping to raise children in fact suggest that kin and neighbors played a central role in slave women's pregnancies and childrearing practices.

Contested Bodies and *The Politics of Reproduction* offer complementary methodologies and narratives. Paugh's skillful use of the scientific and religious contexts of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Great Britain would have benefitted Turner's argument regarding slave children, as a more thorough discussion of the evolving conceptions of youth in Europe as well as the reform efforts made for their protection, education, and labor would explain how these

changes emboldened the imperial government to take control over planters' treatment of their young chattel. While Paugh's microhistory of an Afro-Barbadian family focuses on women in an elite position, Turner's extensive and masterful use of archival sources demonstrates how the majority of enslaved women dealt with intrusions into the most private aspect of their lives. Moreover, the two different case studies offer a well-rounded picture of British Caribbean slave societies' similarities and differences. For instance, the exceptional natural increase of Barbados's small slave population led its plantocracy to style itself as the moral leaders of demographic reform and the end of the slave trade. On the other hand, Jamaican planters consistently needed more chattel from the trade and were more reluctant to accept reform. The two Caribbean slave societies also offer contrasting analyses of medical practices. The shift Paugh describes from white to black midwives in Barbados contrasts with Turner's finding that Jamaican planters continued to rely on black medical healers throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Furthermore, the two authors reach different conclusions regarding childcare. Paugh shows that during the era of emancipation, "many planters presented the care of children as the individual obligation of laboring parents" (p. 188) as a way to instill industry among bondspeople before freedom, while Turner demonstrates the increased control of planters over their young chattel throughout the age of emancipation. In the end, these two studies individually and collaboratively demonstrate the need for historians of slavery to understand the centrality of enslaved women's sexuality, fertility, and childrearing practices in the half-century preceding the abolition of slavery.

Alix Rivière

History Department, Tulane University

alix.riviere75@gmail.com