

The book is particularly captivating with its coverage of a wide range of issues: the reader learns about work sharing in households (early with African cattle herders, later in homesteading), the development of professions, the enormously varying range of women's rights and options, child work on farms and in mining, the Indian caste system and serfdom in Eastern Europe. Besides the regions already mentioned, the Americas are covered from the tributary-redistributive societies of the Incas, Mayas, and Aztecs, to the seventeenth-century Spanish colonists in Mexico, the weavers of Quito, and the African slaves on plantations in Brazil, the Caribbean and North America. An especially well-organized part of the book outlines the developments of work forms driven by the mechanization of the industrial revolution. In the textile industry the movement from the older form of cottage industry and subcontracting, to increasingly centralization in factories with remuneration gradually moving from piece rates to time wages.

In the last part of the book covering the time after 1800, distributional issues again play a central role. Conflicts about working conditions, length of work, and wages influence legislation and drive unionization. Lucassen is strongly committed to equalizing the distribution of income, also when discussing scenarios for the future. Here, an economist needs to emphasize points that are also developed in the book: prosperity builds on ingenuity, effort, long work hours, education, and diligence. Consequently, the (welfare) state guiding income distribution must factor in the international competition from hard-driving suppliers of goods and services, as well as rising migratory pressures.

*TOBIAS F. RÖTHELI, Professor of Macroeconomics, University of Erfurt, Erfurt, Germany*

*Professor Rötheli's research in the field of behavioral economics focuses on credit and business cycles, forecasting, and models of expectations formation.*

. . .

**Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic.** *By Jennifer Morgan.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021. 296p. Cloth, \$107.95. ISBN: 978-1-4780-1323-5.

doi:[10.1017/S0007680524000072](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007680524000072)

Reviewed by Samantha Payne

Jennifer Morgan has devoted her life to trying to understand the role of gender and reproduction in the emergence of racial capitalism.

*Reckoning with Slavery* is the perfect title for her insightful and provocative new book, which reads less like a traditional monograph than a sweeping attempt to reckon with the major historical questions that have haunted her throughout her life. How and why were African women erased from the archives? What did this erasure mean for these women and their kin? How did it shape the world we live in today? And how might we refuse to let it continue to do so? These are not easy questions and Morgan does not aspire to give definitive answers—rather, the book feels almost like a long-form meditation, in which readers are invited to reflect on topics ranging from the role of numeracy in the making of modern racism to the centrality of fertility control as a form of resistance within the Black radical tradition. Morgan's *Reckoning with Slavery* is broken up into six chapters, which I briefly summarize below.

Chapter 1 opens with the broad question of how the presence of African women shaped the origins of capitalism and slavery. Morgan points out that the words *negro* and *slave* were gendered male in the earliest records of European contact with explorers (p. 34). Ship captains often declined to record the age and sex of enslaved captives even as they transported hundreds of thousands of women and children across the Atlantic (p. 49). Morgan sees the “erasure of gendered categories” from these ship logs as a “crucial originary moment” for the “racialized logic of modernity” (pp. 46–49). She contends that merchants deliberately portrayed Africans as kinless, “rationalizing the slave trade by embedding it within a narrative from which no recognizable women or children could emerge” (p. 37). Thus, she concludes, “the very data through which specificity can be achieved are part of the technology that renders Africans and their descendants outside the scope of modernity.” This basic insight, she insists, remains “fundamentally absent from the scholarship on the demographics of the slave trade” (p. 43).

Chapter 2 continues her investigation of the ways that “normative processes of violence are embedded in numerical evidence” (p. 55). In this chapter, she argues that “numeracy begat race-based thought” (p. 91). To support this claim, she draws on the writings of Thomas Hariot, John Graunt, and William Petty—three English mathematicians who helped promote demography as a tool of statecraft during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (pp. 91–108). These men, according to Morgan, insisted that “to know the numbers was to know specific facts rather than opinions” (pp. 96–97). That did not stop them from using their data to assert who should, or should not, be considered an “unfit subject” of the English crown (p. 97). For Morgan, the emergence of this “ability to couch moral judgment in secular rationality” was a crucial step in the rise of modern racism (p. 91). The next step took place in

Africa (p. 113). Chapter 3 argues that European travelers in early modern Africa erased evidence of African numeracy from their published narratives in order to justify racial slavery (pp. 123, 126). Europeans simultaneously portrayed Africans as “indifferent parents” who produced children for “sale or murder” (pp. 126, 131). The supposed failures of Africans to recognize the value of kin ultimately produced an image of a continent “ripe for the taking” (p. 131).

Chapter 4 changes gears. Morgan opens the second half of her book with a new question: what does it mean to frame an examination of the Middle Passage with the story of individual female captives? (p. 143). One of the most haunting images from this chapter—and the entire book—is of an unnamed African woman who, “being very fond of her Child, Carrying her up and downe, wore her[self] to nothing by which means fell into a feavour and dyed” (p. 166). Morgan suggests that this mother’s unbearable grief reveals “the growth of a critical comprehension among captive Africans about the relationship between the disruption of family and the production of children for a marketplace” (p. 160). Chapter 5 argues that African women carried this comprehension with them as they left the slave ships, bringing “knowledge of markets, commodities, currency, valuations, and of course, kinship” to plantations (p. 171). These women knew that “the terms of their labor were not distinct from their sexual availability and reproductive future” (p. 185). The final chapter takes up the “question of refusal” (p. 207). Here, Morgan considers a range of ways to locate enslaved women’s oppositional consciousness in the archives despite white attempts to erase the evidence. I was fascinated by Morgan’s call for a new history of “fertility control” as a “form of strike” (p. 222). She argues that such acts by African women constituted “the origins of the Black radical tradition” (p. 254).

Some of the stories in this book are so tragic and disturbing that you will never forget them. The writing is sometimes beautiful—I lingered over the final sentence: “The refusal to relinquish a child to the market . . . [was] a refusal felt so powerfully and clearly that it ‘wore you down to nothing’ and left you dead with your claim to family, to kin, clenched forever in your arms” (p. 255). At other times, though, the clarity of the text suffers when Morgan introduces concepts which she then immediately discards. I was not convinced that the book benefited from, for instance, a discussion of “agnology,” or the history of questions that remain unasked (p. 217). I also wondered at times about the rapid way that Morgan moves between “European” and “English” in the text. She alludes in several chapters to a distinct history of Iberian relations with Africa, including that “historians of the Iberian Atlantic have done much to disrupt this narrative arc by clarifying the mutual

recognition of sovereignty that characterized much of the first decades of contact” (p. 108). Any sense of what this “mutual recognition” entailed is absent from the book, making it difficult to assess whether Morgan is describing a truly “European” process of racialization or a specifically English one. A deeper engagement with this literature might also trouble the central contention of *Black Marxism*—Morgan’s theoretical pillar—that European racism *gave rise to capitalism*, and not the other way around (p. 16). Still, these are critiques around the margins. I would recommend spending a long time sitting with *Reckoning with Slavery*, and coming back to it again and again.

SAMANTHA PAYNE, Assistant Professor, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC, USA

Professor Payne is a historian of slavery and emancipation in the Atlantic World. She is currently working on her first book, *The Last Atlantic Revolution* (under contract with University of North Carolina Press), which explores the Atlantic history of Reconstruction in the United States, Cuba, and Brazil.

. . .

Masters of Health: Racial Science and Slavery in U.S. Medical Schools. By Christopher Willoughby. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022. 282 pp., 9 halftones, notes, bibl., index. Hardcover, \$99.00. ISBN: 978-1-4696-7184-0.

doi:[10.1017/S0007680524000102](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007680524000102)

Reviewed by Brice Bowrey

During the summer of 1796, one of the Founding Fathers and a signatory of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, Benjamin Rush, was busy conducting experiments. He was not writing about the workings of the federal government or experimenting with the structure of the fledgling nation. Instead, he was studying Henry Moss, a Black man who had developed spots of white skin over his body. In his capacity as a physician, Rush, like many other members of the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania, sought to use medical science to describe and explain race and racial differences. Rush and his contemporaries argued that environment, culture, and social factors could alter one’s race. However, as the medical profession solidified and expanded during the early nineteenth century, Rush’s views were replaced with a racial science that reified racial hierarchies, promoted imperialism, and ensconced teachings about racial difference into the canon of the medical curriculum (p. 19). Christopher Willoughby’s *Masters of Health*