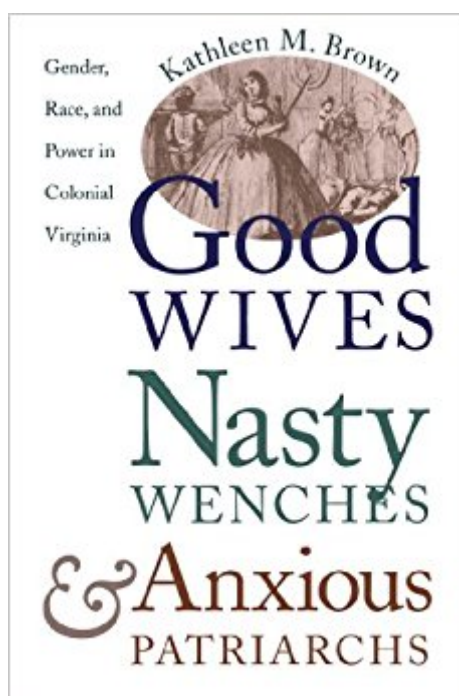


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Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, And Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, And Power In Colonial Virginia (Published By The Omohundro Institute Of Early ... And The University Of North Carolina Press)



Synopsis

Kathleen Brown examines the origins of racism and slavery in British North America from the perspective of gender. Both a basic social relationship and a model for other social hierarchies, gender helped determine the construction of racial categories and the institution of slavery in Virginia. But the rise of racial slavery also transformed gender relations, including ideals of masculinity. In response to the presence of Indians, the shortage of labor, and the insecurity of social rank, Virginia's colonial government tried to reinforce its authority by regulating the labor and sexuality of English servants and by making legal distinctions between English and African women. This practice, along with making slavery hereditary through the mother, contributed to the cultural shift whereby women of African descent assumed from lower-class English women both the burden of fieldwork and the stigma of moral corruption. Brown's analysis extends through Bacon's Rebellion in 1676, an important juncture in consolidating the colony's white male public culture, and into the eighteenth century. She demonstrates that, despite elite planters' dominance, wives, children, free people of color, and enslaved men and women continued to influence the meaning of race and class in colonial Virginia.

Book Information

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"This big book is intriguing, provocative, and deeply unsettling." *Journal of Southern History* "[S]he

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Meticulously researched, carefully reasoned, and gracefully written, this book should be on the reading list of every historian.--American Historical ReviewKathleen Brown has written an important book that is going to revolutionize our understanding of colonial Virginia, of the origins of slavery, and of the role of gender in the evolution of early American society. . . . An admirable combination of sophisticated conceptual design and richly textured and original data . . . that will have a major intellectual impact across the fields of American history.--Drew Gilpin Faust, author of Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil WarKathleen Brown's magnificent book, Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs, places gender at the center of early Virginia history for the first time. Her interpretations are persuasive because they are informed by judicious use of feminist theories and by an insistence that early Virginia was a changing tri-racial society.--Allan Kulikoff, Northern Illinois UniversityShould be a standard purchase for all academic libraries with holdings in U.S. history.--ChoiceAn ambitious work, elaborate in construction and prodigious in research. . . . It could reshape profoundly our understanding of the history of colonial Virginia. . . . This big book is intriguing, provocative, and deeply unsettling.--Journal of Southern HistoryOne of the most important and interesting books ever published about colonial Virginia history.--Virginia LibrariesIn the early days of women's history, its practitioners promised that the study of women would one day change the way we look at history itself. Arguing that gender and sexuality were central to the development of both slavery and the eighteenth century's plantation elite, Kathleen Brown makes good on that promise.--Suzanne Lebsock, University of Washington This book is . . . crucial to our understanding not only of gender but of race and power in colonial Virginia.--Journal of Southwest Georgia History

Well written, thoroughly researched and very informative; however, I was expecting the book to be different. I don't know how to explain my expectations. I think I was looking for a less detailed, more entertaining read. The title is what drew me to the book!

Very interesting view of Colonial Virginia's hierarchy with detailed research to support the thesis of female rights and their societal position relative to men and slaves. Well written. Recommend to anyone interested in early American history, daily life in colonial Virginia and the legacy of slavery in the US.

This was one of the text books assigned to my senior level Colonial America class. I enjoyed reading this text and discussing it in class every week. The amount of information that it covered was amazing and gave a very clear picture of how women lived during a very important time in US history.

A heavy book in all senses of the word. Interesting material, not necessarily always told in an interesting manner. A good, but again not compellingly told, overview of women's rights or non-rights in the 18th C. But be sure to feel strong when reading it! It's VERY heavy, and the Kindle version does not have the maps or pictures of the printed version.

Great stories, such rich details, well written. It's a thick book that will take some time to get through, but it's a fun journey.

My kind of book.

This book is very important for men to read, because these so not trust no one if you can not trust your wife who can you trust then.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Anglo-American discourses of gender, race and power underwent major historical transformations; authority was no longer the "natural" expression of divine providence, and in the New World beliefs in fundamental sex differences acquired new meanings. As Kathleen M. Brown makes clear in her work, this was no simple transition; rather, the language of gender "became part of English efforts to define differences, communicate their own

authority, and anchor their identities in Christianity and civility" in a land of unfamiliar land and peoples. Brown aims at nothing less than a revisioning of colonial Virginian society during this crucial early modern period by placing gender at the center of historical analysis of that "virgin" colony, Virginia, from the arrival of the earliest colonial settlers to the mid-eighteenth century, when the gentry elite reached the apex of their power. This work's novelty lies in Brown's insistence on gender as crucial in the demarcation of the sexual, racial, and class boundaries. However, Brown is not writing a "women's history" in the traditional sense; one of the strengths of her text is her insistence on the interconnectedness of gender, race, sex, and class. Thus some of her most provocative arguments examine the construction of white masculinity, notably during and after Bacon's rebellion. Brown ultimately succeeds in her goal to "complicate" our understanding of the initial setbacks in patriarchal social hierarchies, the "subsequent rise of the planter class and its authority," and the ways in which race, class and gender shaped colonial society in this formidable work.

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