

their outlook and ambitions. The lord of southern Powys at the time (Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, d. 1286), having grown up in England, “apparently regarded himself primarily as a Marcher lord” (114; fully explored 133–58). On the other hand, Gruffudd, lord of Bromfield in northern Powys (115–32), may have “begun to abandon his role as a magnate of the March in favour of a more thoroughly Welsh lordship” (132). Stephenson closes the narrative section with a careful analysis of Powysian lordship towards the end of the thirteenth century, under the new dispensation imposed by Edward I of England (159–77).

In part two, as noted, Stephenson focuses on “structures, fault-lines and political culture” within high medieval Powys. Chapter 9 is devoted to aspects of governance, analyzing the legitimation of rule, the role in decision making played by counsellors, especially family members and by assemblies of freemen; the increasing importance of seigneurial officials; and the place of Powys in the history of Welsh laws. In chapter 10 he discusses why high medieval Powys was apparently conspicuously prone to “dynastic fragmentation” (compared to other Welsh kingdoms). In chapter 11 he considers “the ecclesiastical dimension”; and a fascinating concluding chapter titled “Some Powysian Perspectives: Fears and Aspirations” sets out to discover “Powysians’ perceptions of their geopolitical neighbours, and their view of Powys in Wales and the marchland” (274). Throughout part two, notable elements of Stephenson’s analysis include a focus on the possible influence of the women who married into the dynasty of Powys, and of local Powysian social elites. For Stephenson, it may have been the latter’s memory of lands once held to the east that shifted the attention of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn’s descendants from the Irish Sea towards the March (292).

The reader is guided by means of chapter conclusions, maps, and genealogical tables. The book could have been rendered more accessible, especially for those new to the subject, by providing a general conclusion (and also, on a minor point, if the map of castles had provided names). Yet there can be no doubt that Stephenson has succeeded brilliantly in synthesizing and expanding his work on high medieval Powys. His book comes highly recommended to all those interested in the nature of high medieval lordship and politics, in Wales—and beyond.

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COURTNEY ERIN THOMAS. *If I Lose Mine Honour I Lose Myself: Honour among the Early Modern English Elite*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017. Pp. 302. \$56.25 (cloth).  
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Beginning in the 1970s, the “cultural turn” drew the attention of many historians away from high politics and social change to the study of cultural phenomena, and the concept of honor emerged as an attractive subject. As cultural history acquired more prominence, many scholars turned to Geertzian “thick descriptions” of the ways in which conceptions of honor influenced behavior. The early modern period, dominated by aristocratic culture, where disputes were often settled through face-to-face confrontations rather than anonymous judicial processes, proved to be a particularly fertile ground for such studies.

But in the case of early modern English history, one historian had made the cultural turn before the turn itself, and that historian was Mervyn James. James is one of the more intriguing figures in early modern historiography. He devoted his scholarly life to the study of the Tudor North, and helped make the field a subject of interest, largely by arguing that between 1540 and 1640 the North was transformed from a traditional aristocratic, or, “lineage” society, to a modern civil society upholding values associated with rule of law and centralized authority.

The concept of honor as understood and practiced by the northern lords and its role in the “lineage” society played a prominent role in his work. James’s work was genuinely interdisciplinary as he made extensive use of the work of anthropologists, including J. G. Peristiany and Julien Pitt-Rivers, both of whom argued that concepts of honor and shame have thrived most often in cultures where society is rural, highly stratified, and lacking in central authority. James found these insights to be particularly useful in understanding the aristocratic culture of the Tudor North. Survival in the north depended in large measure on the power of a lord’s reputation to deter disputes. Thus, one’s reputation must be guarded fiercely, insults answered immediately, and vengeance and retribution become part of everyday life. James’s work had its critics, including the present author, but he clearly had blazed a trail that would be followed by others.

By the mid-nineties a profusion of studies concerning the importance of honor had appeared. Such historians as Richard Cust, Felicity Heal, Cynthia Herrup, and Victor Kiernan produced studies testifying to the multitude of roles played by honor in aristocratic societies. By the late nineties, however, a backlash emerged, as scholars began to focus on the contradictions and inconsistencies found in some early modern conceptions of honor, as well as the difference between theory and practice. Some scholars even concluded that honor was so complex and diverse that it had little usefulness as a historical category.

Thus, Courtney Erin Thomas’s book is both timely and welcome. She has attempted to assess the state of the field, and, while she has done significant archival investigation of her own, her book is most valuable as a thoughtful synthesis and assessment of it. Much of her work deals with the advancement of our understanding of issues concerning women’s honor. James, for example, appears to have assumed that honor was a concept limited to aristocratic men. But, as Thomas notes, the works of such scholars as Susan Amussen, Laura Gowing, and Linda Pollock have shown that honor was an important cultural construct for women, too, and women were often as eager as men to guard their reputations.

While Thomas grants the existence of overlapping and sometimes contradictory narratives in honor studies, she nonetheless insists that honor remained a central tenet of the lives of early modern elites, who realized the importance of protecting their reputations and were acutely aware of how closely honor and reputation were linked to influence, power, self-esteem, and deference. Anyone who doubted its value had only to lose it to realize its importance. In contrast to Mervyn James, Thomas sees relatively little change in how the concept of honor was regarded between 1540 and 1640. In the face of momentous political, demographic, and social change, honor remained, particularly among English elites, something to be highly desired and defended.

Anyone interested in honor studies will find Thomas’s book to be a well-written and welcome addition to the subject, especially as it pertains to women. But, despite the book’s many virtues, one cannot help but wonder whether several issues have been slighted. First, honor studies grew largely out of the “cultural turn” and the recognition that other disciplines, especially anthropology, had much to offer historians. It would have been useful to explore what has happened in anthropological studies of honor in recent literature and to address whether they still offer the insights they once did. Second, it must be understood that the demands of lordship were often at variance with concept of honor. Honorable behavior often clashed with the more urgent need to survive. Thomas does devote some attention to this issue (48–53) and provides a pertinent example, but concludes by returning to the more traditional view that the “better sort” still feared that they could lose their honor if they failed to act in accordance with the precepts of honorable behavior. While it is clear that many believed that insults must indeed be answered and reputations guarded, a lord who confronted every threat to his or her honor and reputation was likely to end up a dead lord. Finally, honor might be best understood as a tale elites tell themselves and others to prove they deserve their superior position and privileges. The various conceptions of honor

were permeable enough to permit them to believe they had it, even when they did not behave in accordance with its demands.

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SASHA TURNER. *Contested Bodies: Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica*. Early American Studies. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017. Pp. 328. \$45.00 (cloth).

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Since 1808, when the abolitionist Thomas Clarkson published his *History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade*, historians have focused their attention on the economic and political factors and the moral and commercial imperatives leading to the abolition of the slave trade and, ultimately, to the demise of the Atlantic slave system. Sasha Turner's important new book, *Contested Bodies: Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica*, places the reproductive bodies of enslaved women at the center of this ongoing historiographical debate. Turner examines shifting views of pregnancy, motherhood, and child care between the emergence of abolitionist agitation in the 1780s and full emancipation in the 1830s, a transitional period that she argues not only politicized enslaved women's bodies and reproductive lives but also transformed the lived experience of slavery in Jamaica.

According to Turner, beginning in the 1780s both abolitionists' pro-natal reforms and the capitalist motives of planters hinged on the reproductive potential of slave women. However, despite a shared fixation on enslaved women's bodies and reproductive practices, the strategic and moral objectives of abolitionists did not align neatly with slave owners' immediate economic interests. While abolitionists articulated arguments focused on the need for slave women to give birth to a new generation of slaves, who would be separated from their mothers at a young age and socialized to embrace Christian values on the path toward freedom and citizenship, planters sought simultaneously to encourage biological reproduction and to maximize plantation labor and profits. Abolitionists' insistence on labor exemptions for pregnant women and new mothers, and calls for a moratorium on harsh punishments such as flogging, led to a conflict "between reform ideology and practical implementation," as masters continued to treat pregnant women and mother-workers as they saw fit (110). For planters long accustomed to replenishing their enslaved workforces through the transatlantic slave trade rather than through biological reproduction, pregnancy, and child care distracted from the business of plantation productivity and profitability. As the value of enslaved women's reproductive capacity increased in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, planters reassessed the importance of breeding, initiating a series of unwelcome interventions in the sexual and parental lives of their captive workers.

Using a wide variety of sources, including abolitionist tracts, medical treatises, parliamentary debates, planter correspondence, and Jamaican plantation records, Turner pushes beyond the archival silences to show how enslaved women responded to and often resisted attempts by reformers, planters, and physicians to control their reproductive lives and undermine their maternal authority. *Contested Bodies* makes a significant contribution to the histories of slavery, gender, and abolition by emphasizing the extent to which struggles over reproduction and neonatal care affected absolutely everyone involved in the slave system, from enslaved men, women, and children to owners, plantation managers, and physicians. Slave women had their own individual and community customs surrounding pregnancy, maternity, infant care,