

Lamonte Aidoo. *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History*. Latin America Otherwise Series. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018. 272 pp. \$99.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8223-7116-8.

Reviewed by Rachael Pasierowska (Rice University)

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Commissioned by Andrew J. Kettler (University of South Carolina)

Power and control are the central themes that drive Lamonte Aidoo's captivating study, which explores the many multifaceted components of sex from within Brazilian slavery. By employing a wide variety of sources from travelers' narratives to legal records, *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History* argues that interracial sex played a crucial role in the formation and evolution of racial exceptionalism. Moreover, Aidoo purports that the practice of sex between blacks and whites enabled a crossing—and at times even erasure—of racial barriers, ultimately demonstrating how race in Brazil could be and was in a constant state of movement and transcendence.

Through sex and its respective activities, both black and white, slave and free, male and female, Brazilians created a complex milieu that portrayed both free blacks and enslaved blacks as licentious and dangerous personages. Aidoo shows how this image prevailed regardless of whether blacks were the victims in such acts. Thus, we see how sexual power allowed white men to retain a masculine identity, in juxtaposition to black males who often found themselves stripped of the stereotypical male identity through white exploitation.

Furthermore, he illustrates how white slave mistresses might exploit the bodies of black wo-

men through prostitution or even sexual activities between mistress and slave in the private sphere. In so doing, white slave mistresses attained a level of agency that was often denied them in nineteenth-century Brazilian society, in addition to economic profits resulting from slave prostitution. Concluding with later twentieth-century depictions of the slave Xica da Silva, Aidoo demonstrates how the legacy of slavery and the sexual victimization in conjunction with the exploitation of black bodies persisted for over a century following the abolition of Brazilian slavery in 1888. Both a film and a later telenovela show the enslaved Xica da Silva as a willing actor and participant in interracial sexual intercourse with her master, which as a consequence masked the brutal violence of rape.

The extent of Aidoo's research is laudable and demonstrates the great amount of work this project entailed: the primary source material is extensive, comprising imagery, Inquisition records and trial scripts, popular literature, medical literature, and travel narratives, among others. Through reading these sources in conjunction with one another we get a detailed depiction of sexual relations in Brazil in the nineteenth century, which gives the reader an objective and nuanced understanding of such rapports. By studying sources together, the author is able to tease

out the voices of the victims who were often invisible actors and unable to resist the brutalities thrust upon them. Regarding secondary sources, Aidoo exemplifies a great level of familiarity with Brazilian scholarship, such as the work of Gilberto Freyre, among others, and creates a study that is rich in sources and engages with both primary and secondary literature in a way that is consistent and praiseworthy.

Slavery Unseen goes beyond typical studies of power and sexual violence by moving away from the quintessential master and enslaved female dialectic. Thus, we learn about the sexual abuse of male slaves, the complex relationships between Brazilian white mistresses and enslaved women, sexual violence among blacks both slave and free, and finally, homosexual intercourse between black males. Although the author sets out that this study is not wholly comparative in nature, *Slavery Unseen* draws many parallels between the study of sexuality and sexual relations among black and white people in the period of slavery in the United States and calls for a more detailed reading of these two great slave societies of the nineteenth century. Aidoo has crafted a brilliant and engaging piece of research that will pave the way for future studies of sexuality, power, and violence across the transatlantic world.

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