

LAMONTE AIDOO. *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History*. Duke UP, 2018, 272 pp.

The study of Western sexuality has become increasingly important since the publication of Michel Foucault's four-volume seminal work *Histoire de la sexualité* (1976; 1984a; 1984b; 2018). In relation to Brazil, this topic remains understudied. Gilberto Freyre's 1933 classic *Casa Grande e Senzala: formação da família brasileira sob o regime de economia patriarcal*, translated as *The Master and the Slaves*, inaugurated the examination of sexuality in Brazilian society. More recently, anthropologist Luiz Mott's *O sexo proibido: virgens, gays e escravos nas garras da Inquisição* (1989), historian James Green's *Beyond Carnival: Male Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Brazil* (1999), and literary critics Susan Canty Quinlan's and Fernando Arenas's *Lusosex: Gender and Sexuality in the Portuguese-Speaking World* (2002) are important works on this subject.

Lamonte Aidoo's *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History* adds an important contribution to the area of Luso-Brazilian sexuality studies. Originally conceived, meticulously researched, and well written and argued, the book is an intellectually sophisticated interdisciplinary study that examines the race relations and interracial sexual violence that are embedded in Brazilian slavery. In the introduction, Aidoo delineates his main argument: sex is fundamental for the building of Brazil, but rather than the celebratory nature of *mestiçagem*, which has always been deeply connected with the notion of harmonic relations between races, he seeks to denounce the "silencing and sanitation of nation's history of rape, sexual violence, and abuse" (3). Drawing from primary and secondary sources—institutional documents, period newspapers, parliamentary debates, medical records, literature, letters, and memoirs, to name just a few—Aidoo's book seeks to undo the myth that Brazil's slave society was benign and that its racial system is a democracy. On the contrary, Aidoo emphasizes the perverse and violent nature of Brazil's slavery, which was engineered to uphold white male supremacy, fulfilling its "purposes for power, control, pleasure, economic gain, reproduction, humiliation, and annihilation" of the black subject (9).

Chapter 1, "The Racial and Sexual Paradoxes of Brazilian Slavery and National Identity," presents a brief (yet well-researched) summary of the history of slavery in Brazil. Here, Aidoo challenges the "national claims of the genteel and exceptional nature of Brazilian slavery" (18) by examining the country's high slave mortality rates, one of the highest in the Americas. Chapter 2, "Illegible Violence: The Rape and Sexual Abuse of Male Slaves," is especially important because it addresses a topic that remains little studied in the scholarship of slavery in Brazil: the rape of male slaves. Using Inquisition records, Aidoo demonstrates how "slavery [was] constructed around white male desire, and [it] were protected under the law" (48). The penetrability of the slave body helped forge the notion of black sexuality as abnormal and impure because "using the enslaved to engage in sinful forms of sex and making that part of their job or duty as slaves as well as part of their identity, white masters were also giving physical form to the abject, sinful stereotypes associated with black sexuality" (57). Aidoo argues that the ideas of the hypersexual *mulata* and the sexually perverted black homosexual (topics analyzed in chapters 3 and 5, respectively) have their genesis in Brazil's latifundia slave economy. Aidoo makes an important argument: "male rape is not an

expression of homosexuality, just as the rape of a woman by a man is not an expression of heterosexuality. Rape and sexual violence are not about sex, sexuality, or repressed sexual desire, but about power” (61). That is, by exerting sexual violence, masters were guaranteeing their power and maintaining white supremacy. Chapter 3, “The White Mistress and the Slave Woman: Seduction, Violence, and Exploitation,” is also original because it addresses another under-examined topic in Luso-Brazilian studies: the sexual relationships of women. Aidoo finds that pathological perceptions of the black female body contributed to the notion of Afro-Brazilian women as sinful disrupters of the virtuous white household, by the seduction of the master and/or the master’s daughters, the *sinhazinhas*. Interestingly, Aidoo demonstrates that some antislavery proponents were more concerned with the dangerous proximity between white and slave women than with the defending the slaves: “white young girls were thought to be especially vulnerable to the corrupting influence of slave women. . . . Antislavery proponents pleaded that what was at stake was the innocence and virtue of all white women” (88–89). To Aidoo, what was ultimately at stake was white male power, so regulating non-white and white women’s bodies was crucial to the reproduction of Brazil’s patriarchal society. In chapter 4, “Social Whiteness: Black Intra-racial Violence and the Boundaries of Black Freedom,” Aidoo shifts the focus from the “white master-black slave” relationship to “black freemen-black slave” exploitation to explore “how complex white supremacist mechanisms became catalyst for violence, domination, and self-interest among blacks themselves” (111). In this chapter, he analyzes how free light-skinned blacks rejected their black roots and embraced whitening. Here, Aidoo returns to and carefully develops the idea of racial passing described in his article “Closet Impurities: Miscegenation and the Racial Closet in Urbano Duarte and Artur de Azevedo’s *O Escravocrata*.” By analyzing how famous mixed-raced Brazilians, such as the celebrated nineteenth-century writer Machado de Assis, passed as white, Aidoo places whitening ideology at the core of white control and power. Aidoo compares racial passing in the US and Brazil, presenting the fascinating postulate that, while passing was a conscious act of racial transgression and social resistance in the US, it contributed to maintain white supremacy in Brazil: “Passing in Brazil, unlike the United States, worked in line with the social order, not against it, [as] whites controlled the terms of the agreement in passers’ simulation of whiteness assuming a socially white identity passers became complicit in reproducing and solidifying white domination” (119). Of special interest in chapter 4 is the analysis of the black owner of slaves, which was common in Brazil but remains little researched. To Aidoo, the fact that non-whites owned slaves erases the perception of slavery as an individualistic phenomenon, placing slaveholding as a power and economic system that contributed to sustain white supremacy. In the final chapter (the fifth), “*O Diabo Preto* (The Negro Devil): The Myth of the Black Homosexual Predator in the Age of Social Hygiene,” Aidoo investigates how nineteenth-century Brazilian medical manuals and naturalist novels constructed homosexuality as a deviation and pathology connected to blackness, creating the idea that black (homo)eroticism endangered the white male and the nation. Aidoo noted that medical professionals and intellectuals both considered black men to be “destroying the nation and its hopes of progress embodied in the heterosexual

white male” (180). In his conclusion, Aidoo reaffirms his central thesis that the traumatic stories told in *Slavery Unseen* need to be told, giving much-needed visibility and voice to “the unseen, unspeakable, uncomfortable narratives of slavery” (196).

*Slavery Unseen* is a truly unique scholarly piece, with great originality, courageous arguments, and singular interdisciplinary approach (drawing from varied cultural products, historical documents, and medical records). In this fascinating study, Aidoo builds a compelling study of slavery through the examination of Brazil’s sexual and social practices. The book can easily be placed in the same rich tradition of notable Brazilian cultural scholars, such as late Harvard Professor Nicolau Sevcenko and his successor, Professor Sidney Chalhoub. *Slavery Unseen* will certainly leave its vital mark in the fields of Luso-Brazilian studies and Afro-Diaspora studies for years to come.

EMANUELLE K. F. OLIVEIRA-MONTE, *Vanderbilt University*

DIANA ARBAIZA. *The Spirit of Hispanism: Commerce, Culture, and Identity across the Atlantic, 1875–1936*. U of Notre Dame P, 2020, 302 pp.

Economics and literature is a field that has rarely taken note of scholarship on Latin America or Spain. A couple decades on from the publication of Marc Shell’s *The Economy of Literature* (1978), Martha Woodmansee and Mark Osteen took stock of the field’s development in their edited collection, *The New Economic Criticism* (1999). Shell contributed his own essay to the volume, which appeared alongside others from established scholars from departments of English, philosophy, history, economics, French, and German. Several decades later, scholars decided to take stock of the field again. In 2019, a follow-up volume, edited by Michelle Chihara and Matt Seybold, appeared as *Routledge Companion to Literature and Economics*. Aiming to correct the blind spots of the 1990s, the new volume is populated by a more diverse set of scholars, intellectually and otherwise. But almost all the contributors hail from English departments, with notable exceptions in Japanese and media studies. Only one of the 37 chapters in the *Companion* is on a Peninsular or Latin American subject, and that subject—Carlos Fuentes’s writing on NAFTA—is studied with Americanist rather than Latin Americanist concerns in mind. Important Latin Americanist and Peninsularist scholars in this field such as Luis Cárcamo-Huechante, Alessandro Fornazzari, and Alejandra Laera rarely, if ever, get a mention in Anglophone scholarship. When such scholars are included, it becomes an intellectual event, as with the 2012 *PMLA* special Theories and Methodologies section on “Economics, Finance, Capital, and Literature,” which featured Ericka Beckman, and Richard Rosa. The situation may be different on the field’s medieval and early modern side, where scholars such as Elvira Vilches and Simone Pinet appear to have received some well-deserved recognition beyond Hispanism.

I begin with this observation not to rehash complaints about the lack of Hispanist scholarly representation in Anglophone-dominated interdisciplinary fields. I do so because Diana Arbaiza’s recent book, *The Spirit of Hispanism*, has helped me