

IN "THE LANGUAGE OF THE CRIMINAL" Slavery and Colonialism in Ibero-America

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For isn't it odd that the only language I have in which to speak of this crime is the language of the criminal who committed the crime?

—*Jamaica Kincaid, A Small Place*

Public Memory of Slavery: Victims and Perpetrators in the South Atlantic. By Ana Lucia Araujo. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2010. Pp. xix + 478. \$139.99 cloth. ISBN: 9781604977141.

Africans to Spanish America: Expanding the Diaspora. Edited by Sherwin K. Bryant, Rachel Sarah O'Toole, and Ben Vinson III. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2012. Pp. 279. \$50.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780252036637.

Women and Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Colonial Cuba. By Sarah L. Franklin. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2012. Pp. xi + 223. \$90.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781580464024.

Voices of the Enslaved in Nineteenth-Century Cuba. By Gloria García Rodríguez. Translated by Nancy L. Westrate. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011. Pp. xviii + 220. \$26.95 paper. ISBN: 9780807871942.

Bound Lives: Africans, Indians, and the Making of Race in Colonial Peru. By Rachel Sarah O'Toole. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012. Pp. xii + 257. \$25.95 paper. ISBN: 9780822961932.

"Damned Notions of Liberty": Slavery, Culture, and Power in Colonial Mexico, 1640–1769. By Frank T. Proctor III. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011. Pp. xiv + 282. \$27.95 paper. ISBN: 9780826349668.

The Hierarchies of Slavery in Santos, Brazil, 1822–1888. By Ian Read. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012. Pp. xiv + 275. \$65.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780804774147.

Given slavery's longevity and widespread past practice, historians of the Americas have struggled to understand and interpret the many questions raised by an institution that ultimately came to represent the antithesis of freedom, and the legacies of racism and discrimination that continue to oppress the descendants of slaves. Do we best understand enslavement by emphasizing the system's horrors and injustices or by highlighting the efforts of slaves to resist or escape them? Do we best capture the experiences of the enslaved in aggregate statistics or through individual cases? Did all slaves yearn for freedom or did most submit

and adapt to their bondage? Is it possible that the inherent binary of these questions obscures more than it reveals?

A number of significant works of scholarship on slavery in the mid-twentieth century, some employing statistical methods, tried to understand slavery as an institution or system—of thought, of labor, or of economic and social relations. These efforts produced some masterful syntheses that shaped the field for decades thereafter.¹ Much of this scholarship was dominated by examinations of plantation slavery in the United States, the Caribbean, and Brazil, leading to the implicit assumption that plantation slaves' experiences were the norm. For much of Ibero-America outside of northeastern Brazil, however, the plantation model explained little about slavery over the colonial period. Instead evidence mounted that the occupations and experiences of slaves varied considerably across the diverse regions of the Iberians' American empires. In another thread of interpretation, some scholars also expressed qualms about the dehumanization they felt was inherent in broad discussions of slavery as a system. They heeded the call of Kátia Mattoso and others "to rescue these men and women from the anonymity in which they have been kept for so long by the combined effects of the old slave system and the new statistics."²

Finding sources that reveal slaves' own thoughts and perspectives continues to be a challenge and a subject of debate among scholars. Few of the enslaved were literate or had opportunities to record their unmediated thoughts and feelings. The Iberians, on the other hand, kept copious documents on both the institution and its victims, usually written by literate, free whites. These documents showed the lives of slaves as both people and property—as chattel in bills of sale and wills, as laborers in their owners' account books, as witnesses or defendants in court records, as spouses and parents in parish records, as objects of scrutiny in Inquisition files, as recipients or petitioners in manumission cases. After decades of debate on how to make sense of slaves' own representations of themselves and their portrayals by others in historical sources, the books under review all mine Iberian and colonial archives with careful confidence that we can illuminate facets of the lives of slaves in the Americas from available sources, often in versions of their own words.

All of the books under review provide evidence to address questions about the extent of slaves' power to control their fates and contest enslavement and its consequences. Five of the books under review claim to emphasize the humanity and agency of the enslaved as subjects in constructing their own lives rather than simply as objects of the oppression and degradation inflicted upon them by the institution of slavery. *Voices of the Enslaved in Nineteenth-Century Cuba*, Gloria

1. Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969); David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966); Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974); Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (1974; New York: Vintage Books, 1976). Gilberto Freyre, *Casa-grande e senzala* (Rio de Janeiro: J. Olympio, 1943); Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *El ingenio* (1978; Barcelona: Crítica, 2001).

2. Kátia de Queirós Mattoso, *To Be a Slave in Brazil, 1550–1888*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 81.

García Rodríguez's collection of excerpts from Cuban archival materials, offers examples of slaves' own voices advocating for themselves through the Spanish colonial legal system. Rachel Sarah O'Toole's *Bound Lives* examines the "lived definitions of caste" (2) and the roles of African-descended people in shaping those definitions in seventeenth-century Peru. Frank Proctor's goal in "*Damned Notions of Liberty*" is to "reveal slaves' complicated understandings" (1–2) of the nature of their enslavement in New Spain from the 1630s to the 1760s and how those understandings shaped their conceptions of freedom. Most of the authors in the edited collection *Africans to Spanish America* focus on slaves who engaged with Spanish colonial institutions to construct and claim particular identities and secure their own and their families' well-being. Ana Lucia Araujo's *Public Memory of Slavery* analyzes how the descendants of slaves, slave traders, and slave owners alike are currently "recreating, reinventing, and rethinking the past" (11) as they memorialize slavery and the slave trade in Brazil and Southern Benin, often for a tourist audience.

In contrast to trends in the larger historiography toward recapturing slave voices, only two of the reviewed books direct most of their attention to the structures of power of the enslavers. Ian Read's *The Hierarchies of Slavery* focuses on slave owners' status and power as a key factor in understanding the treatment and experience of slaves in Santos, Brazil, from independence in 1822 to the final abolition of slavery in 1888. In *Women and Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Colonial Cuba*, Sarah Franklin examines Cuban elites' use of patriarchy as a tool to maintain order in the island's rapidly evolving plantation society of the nineteenth century.

The edited collection *Africans to Spanish America* provides a useful introduction to the current state of slavery studies in that region with essays from two senior scholars, Nancy E. Van Deusen and Herbert S. Klein, and from seven distinguished historians who completed their graduate studies in the late 1990s or early 2000s. The editors' introduction lays out several historiographical issues, in addition to those raised above, that animate current work on slavery in Spanish America: the North Atlantic emphasis of much of the scholarship on the African diaspora, the emphasis on the Atlantic region to the neglect of Pacific connections, the relative dearth of regional studies of African-descended peoples in areas that retained indigenous populations (the Andes, Mexico), and the relative paucity of work on the earliest years of slavery in colonial Spanish America. The collection admirably contributes to righting these deficiencies.

The editors offer a concise review of three waves of scholarship on slavery and blackness in Spanish America with an emphasis on the evolution of scholarly understanding of the cultures of Africans and their descendants, whether through African "survivals," cultural transformation through creolization, or a diaspora paradigm. The editors situate the volume's essays within a current, fourth wave of scholarship, the innovation of which is the quest to "situate African-descended people in their own narratives . . . measured on their own terms" (9). The editors advocate avoiding binaries in favor of blending viewpoints and frameworks to arrive at a more balanced understanding of African-descended peoples' lives and cultures in Spanish America. To do so, the contributors to the volume stretch the

notion of African diaspora chronologically—back into the fifteenth century—and geographically, from the eastern and western Atlantic across the Western Hemisphere to the Pacific.

Two authors discuss some of the earliest African migrants to the Americas beginning in the sixteenth century. Leo Garofalo uses Spanish passenger lists and official licenses for Indies travel to document the presence of free and enslaved Afro-Iberians (Africans and their descendants who had first lived in Iberia) in early imperial trade, conquest, and colonization endeavors, on land and sea on both sides of the Atlantic. He argues that these black and mixed-race intermediaries were likely as vital to creating the Spanish colonial empire and culture as the more-often-studied indigenous allies. Charles Beatty-Medina looks at coastal Ecuador from 1577 to 1617 to examine Afro-Amerindian maroons whose leaders used Spanish authorities' desire to promote Christianization as a "tool" to pursue "legitimation and continued autonomy on the frontiers of Spain's empire and within an African diasporic world" (96). On the one hand, maroon leaders accepted sympathetic missionaries and adopted Christian discourse and norms. On the other hand, they also resisted military incursions and outside governance. In Beatty-Medina's telling the leaders wielded some power as agents of imperial defense and could successfully resist some (but not all) aspects of Hispanicization, showing that conversion did not necessarily signify submission and defeat for Africans.

Joan Cameron Bristol's and Nancy E. Van Deusen's chapters also explore Catholic expressions and their meanings among African-descended people in the more thoroughly colonized settings of eighteenth-century Mexico City and seventeenth-century Lima. Bristol analyzes a case brought before the Inquisition of some humble people of color who established a group dedicated to the veneration of St. Augustine, with many of the trappings of official Catholic institutions, such as crosses and images of saints. Bristol argues that the case shows Afro-Mexicans' level of assimilation of Catholic practices, but also their desires to worship on their own terms. She speculates at length about the extent of subversion of church authority intended by the congregants or perceived by accusers and witnesses, yet the inquisitors finally decided the ceremonies were "mundane, if imprudent," not subversive (119). Bristol wants to say that these Afro-Mexicans "were able to use [Catholicism's] symbols to imitate—and in the process create alternate meanings of—authority" (132), but the evidence does not support more than speculation.

Van Deusen studies *donadas*, female convent servants of African or indigenous descent who had a religious vocation but were prohibited from full monastic status. Using documentation from the *donadas*' requests for admittance to the convent (*autos de ingreso*) Van Deusen eschews binaries of interpretation about African survivals or assimilation. In contrast to Bristol, she concludes that though these women did not simply accept subjugation based on race and class, "neither did they always resist, negotiate their 'identities,' or mimic Spanish superiors" (152). Instead for some, the convent system seemed to offer a haven in which women of color chose to serve God and "carr[y] the cross of Christ" honorably (152).

Proctor's and O'Toole's chapters focus more explicitly on uses and meanings of ethnonyms of Africanity in seventeenth-century Mexico City and northern

Peru. The two are also authors of books discussed below. Proctor and O'Toole both assert that people of color often were allowed to self-proclaim terms of identity in parish and court records. Proctor uses petitions for marriage licenses and marriage registers as evidence to explore Africans' formation of real and fictive kinship ties. He contends that particular African ethnic identifications had "no official implications" in this setting (60), and therefore, Africans regularly chose names that were meaningful to them. However, they often chose terms used by slave traders, such as *angola* or *congo/a*, which corresponded to broad regions of cultural similarity in Africa, rather than more local cultural, linguistic, or political entities. The forced migration of the slave trade and insertion into the vastly different cultural setting of Central Mexico disrupted those local identities and encouraged enslaved Africans to create "new diasporic ethnic identities, which were distinct from those they would have claimed in Africa," through their choices of marriage partners and witnesses (62).

O'Toole's chapter discusses the case of Ana de la Calle, who identified herself in her will from 1719 as a free *morena* of *casta lucumí*, a free, dark-skinned woman from the Yoruba-speaking peoples of West Africa (79). Similar to Proctor's argument about the utility of specific ethnonyms to slaves themselves, O'Toole deconstructs "why such terms may have been useful to a free woman of color in northern coastal Peru" in this period (75). She finds that De la Calle used the term *morena* rather than *negra* to simultaneously designate her African descent and to highlight her status as free, since the latter term was usually associated with enslaved status. The motives behind claiming *lucumí* are more elusive, because such claims were unusual among free people of color in eighteenth-century Peru. O'Toole speculates that De la Calle was more interested in associating herself with *lucumí* people of distinction in colonial Trujillo than with establishing a specific African origin.

O'Toole's careful deconstruction of the possible meanings of De la Calle's choice of terms reveals the benefits and problems inherent in the examination of individual cases. Similar to Bristol's chapter, the evidence is thin for any definitive conclusions about motives and meanings. The records provide fascinating glimpses of public actions, but the private scripts that motivated those acts remain frustratingly out of reach. What is valuable in the analysis is the historians' careful elaboration of the context in which the acts took place. However, we are left wondering how to generalize or integrate these cases into larger narratives about slavery and diasporic identities beyond the accumulating examples of the diversity of each.

Two of the chapters in *Africans to Spanish America* discuss the late colonial period in Cuba, the only Spanish colony to develop a modern, large-scale sugar plantation economy. Karen Y. Morrison's chapter revisits patterns of marriage and concubinage investigated in the 1970s by Verena Stolcke (formerly Martínez-Alier) in her foundational work *Marriage, Class, and Colour in Nineteenth-Century Cuba*.³ Stolcke argued that a strict, and largely fixed, racial hierarchy was enforced through marriage restrictions during the height of the sugar plantation economy

3. Verena Martínez-Alier, *Marriage, Class, and Colour in Nineteenth-Century Cuba: A Study of Racial Attitudes and Sexual Values in a Slave Society*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989).

between 1820 and 1860. Morrison revisits the Cuban church archives and finds evidence of a greater ambiguity in what scholars and people at the time have called "whitening"—people of color choosing lighter-skinned mates to improve their social status in a racist society, and elites trying to "whiten" their societies through European immigration. Similar to other authors in the collection, Morrison admits to the dominant forces at work in Cuba's plantation-era society, in this case a well-defined racial hierarchy, which led to endogamous marriages and marginalized interracial consensual unions as the norm. However, her return to the archives unearthed enough cases that disrupted or transgressed those norms to question the fixity of racial categories for the elites and the desirability of whitening for people of color. For instance, clergymen regularly intrigued to whiten the status of children left at orphanages or granted a parent's petition to change baptismal records. Some of the most interesting cases unearthed by Morrison show people formerly classified as white petitioning for reclassification as brown or *pardo* to allow them to marry a person of color. Though Morrison does not say this, it appears that for many of the petitioners discussed in this essay, the desire to live within the church's rules on marriage was greater than the desire to live as white. Racial boundaries could be crossed in both directions for a variety of reasons.

Michele Reid-Vazquez explores free women of color who were midwives in nineteenth-century Cuba in the midst of local and international debates on the occupation. This is another analysis, similar to those of Proctor, O'Toole, Beatty-Medina, and Morrison, that focuses on colonial norms of religion, race, and gender, and in this case labor, to see how people of color appropriated or contested those norms to secure some advantage. Reid-Vazquez discusses the case of María del Pilar Poveda, a midwife of color who was accused of conspiring with her son-in-law in the Escalera rebellion of 1844. Though sentenced to a year of labor in a Havana hospital and barred from practicing midwifery, when Poveda completed her sentence, she successfully petitioned to return to midwifery to support her family. Though Poveda's story provides another example of the potential flexibility of the Spanish colonial system, Reid-Vazquez notes a parallel with Morrison's chapter in that officials' attempt to "whiten" midwifery "produced incomplete and often unintended results" (201). Poveda's return to midwifery shows this to be true in the short term, but the author's subsequent evidence shows that by the late 1860s officials' intended results had been achieved. No midwives of color appeared in official censuses, and their practice of the profession had likely been driven underground.

Herbert Klein's chapter in *Africans to Spanish America* fits somewhat uncomfortably in this collection. He returns to big questions raised by earlier scholars such as Frank Tannenbaum on slavery as a system, which he feels have been neglected in recent work on the African diaspora in the Americas, "the comparative differences and similarities between slave regimes in the Americas and the influence of those differences on post-manumission integration of Africans" (206).⁴ Klein

4. Frank Tannenbaum, in *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1946), argued that Iberian law and Catholicism recognized and sometime even protected

contrasts the diversity of labor markets and occupations for Africans and their descendants across Ibero-America with the less varied labor markets of North America. He also notes that even in the plantation economies of Cuba and Brazil slaves were allowed more mobility and autonomy than slaves in North America. He argues provocatively that “we could say that Brazil and Cuba were the true capitalist societies and that the United States was willing to sacrifice economic rationality for other preferred ends” (210). The reasons for these divergent paths have not been sufficiently explained, in his estimation, and they will not be if scholars continue to focus on culture.

Klein’s observation that much recent research has focused on “the importance of African survivals in the Diaspora” (218) does not apply to the essays in this collection, as the authors are careful to talk of re-creations or reinventions of African culture and identities, not survivals. He also criticizes recent scholars for not establishing “the basic social and economic structures of the slave societies” that they study, which also seems wide of the mark. If anything, there is more contextual description than documentary evidence in several of the volume’s essays. Klein’s observation that “much of this scholarship has been based on single case studies or the experiences of a very few individuals without explaining their uniqueness or commonality with larger groups” is more to the point (218). Many of the authors in this collection are at pains to prove the diversity and malleability of slavery in Spanish America in part because such an interpretation allows them to highlight the interesting and often exceptional cases of slaves and free people of color who advocated for themselves in print through colonial institutions. All the authors offer good examples of African-descended people demonstrating agency, using the norms and institutions of empire to their own ends. Ferreting out Afro-Hispanic peoples’ attitudes and motivations for doing so is less successful and leads to speculation about more contestation and negotiation than might have existed. Readers are left to wonder how representative such advocacy really was. The longer format of the monographs under review helps to address the problem of representativeness.

Proctor’s and O’Toole’s books, “*Damned Notions of Liberty*” and *Bound Lives*, fill some of the gaps in our knowledge of slavery in Spanish America raised in the introduction of *Africans to Spanish America*, which is not surprising given that O’Toole is among the editors and both she and Proctor contributed essays. Both books are regional studies of slavery and slaves in colonial settings with large indigenous populations, New Spain and northern Peru. Both cover periods relatively neglected in the scholarship, from 1640 into the eighteenth century; O’Toole ends in 1730, Proctor in 1769. Both authors articulate the goal of examining slavery and the lived experiences and identities of slaves from the slaves’ perspectives. The topics covered in each book are quite similar as well and will be familiar to students of slavery studies: labor and labor markets, slaves’ engagement with Catholicism as a way to establish communities, slaves’ choices of marriage partners,

the humanity of slaves, providing more avenues to family life and freedom, than other empires in the Americas. He concluded that Iberians’ recognition of slaves’ humanity created less oppressive race relations in Latin America than in other American regions after emancipation.

the racial and/or ethnic terms of identity used by slaves to describe themselves, violence and punishment, and flight as a tactic of resistance. Though these are well-worn topics in the field, the distinct projects and questions that animate each book lead to some innovative and potentially provocative conclusions.

The first half of Proctor's book highlights Afro-Mexicans' agency through such actions as claiming African ethnic identities, practicing medicine, and identifying marriage partners as they constructed families and communities.⁵ He raises his study from the level of exemplary and anecdotal cases with data sets on slave populations in sugar plantations in Central Mexico from 1687 to 1724, hacienda censuses and slave prices up to 1759, marriage patterns, and manumission, as well as detailed individual cases that illustrate larger patterns. The second half of the book explores Afro-Mexicans' notions of freedom and resistance to enslavement, and some may find his conclusions surprising. In a chapter on masters' violence against slaves, he mines blasphemy cases heard by the Inquisition to find that a majority of instances of blasphemy by slaves happened close on physical punishment for flight, theft, or failure to complete work. Proctor discusses several horrific cases of beatings and maimings of slaves by their owners or by other slaves at the masters' order. Yet, he contends that slaves expected, and in some measure accepted, that breaches of their obligation to labor could result in physical punishment, but that there were norms of punishment that should not be breached (injuring certain tender body parts, administering excessive numbers of lashes, irritating wounds with wax, urine, salt, etc.). Sometimes slaves marked those breaches by blaspheming, or more rarely by lodging a complaint and requesting a new owner (114). He disrupts our expectations by avoiding moralizing and instead discusses physical punishment as a setting for negotiation between the enslaved and their enslavers over mutually accepted norms, not simply as evidence of the oppressiveness of slavery. Similarly, his reading of slaves' own narratives in many archival cases of flight, rebellion, and manumission most often reveals the constraints imposed on slaves by the Spanish legal system, not its openness to a human desire for freedom à la Tannenbaum, or the oft-assumed revolutionary spirit inside every slave. Proctor concludes that abstract notions of liberty were not central to Afro-Mexican slaves' identities before what Peter Blanchard has called the development of a "language of liberation" in the later eighteenth century.⁶ The enslaved were, instead, most often interested in pursuing what autonomy they could to lighten the weight of slavery, not to overturn it.

O'Toole arrives at a parallel conclusion through an examination of the processes by which both indigenous Andeans and African slaves in Peru constructed themselves as colonial subjects in the hierarchy of caste or *casta* through colonial institutions such as the courts and the church. Her greatest innovation may be in her simultaneous analysis of Andeans and Africans in the same narrative, a rarity in scholarship on colonial Latin America. The Spanish Crown and Catho-

5. Proctor's essay in *Africans to Spanish America* is a shorter version of chapter 2 in "Damned Notions of Liberty."

6. Peter Blanchard, "The Language of Liberation: Slave Voices in the Wars of Independence," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 82, no. 3 (2002): 499–523.

lic Church constructed Andeans and Africans differently and tried to keep the groups separate, in discourse and in practice. Scholars often have reproduced that separation in their research.

Bound Lives shows that both groups used the colonial framework of paternalistic colonial law and *casta* categories to establish “legal locations” from which to protect their communities and families (2). In the early years of colonial Peru, indigenous leaders used Spanish characterization of their people as weak and miserable Indians “as performative acts,” rather than fixed identities, to enlist royal protection against Spanish colonists’ encroachments on their land and water rights (66). As disease and labor tribute obligations disrupted their communities, Andean elites in particular inserted themselves into the wider market economy and retooled some, but not all, aspects of their identities. Many adopted articles of Spanish clothing or Catholic practices. According to O’Toole, these representations were not simple imitations or examples of assimilation; neither were they internalizations of derogatory categories, though she does not say this outright. Instead she claims that indigenous elites in northern Peru adopted *casta* categories in their negotiations with colonial officials and thus “made the *casta* Indian work for them, illustrating its unfixed but definitive nature” (121). She also finds that indigenous men participated in controlling slaves to “maintain a position within the colonial state, . . . increasingly to the benefit of local landholders and slaveowners” (152). Such contentions raise the question of whether there is a line between actual assimilation and using the dominant culture for the ends of the dominated. It is hard to see any line here.

More convincingly, in chapter 2 O’Toole shows enslaved Africans forming bonds with other captives and learning about Hispanic culture and norms as they endured multiple market transactions on the long middle passage to Peru. Several of the cases she examines show slaves employing the categories applied to them under colonialism and slavery to gain advantage. They worked those categories to claim “the value of their own status as property” (62) due to their skills or to the colonial *casta* category applied to them, which assigned particular characteristics to people from various regions of Africa, such as *mina*, *congo*, or *arara*. She concludes that “similar to developing a black legal consciousness, captives developed a market consciousness, and some were able to take advantage of their value” to seek new owners or resist mistreatment (163).

Similar to Proctor, O’Toole also examines court cases on punishment, flight, and manumission to understand the norms of daily life in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century northern Peru. By juxtaposing the Andeans’ and Africans’ legal space to claim autonomy, she finds that the enslaved had “fewer regulations governing their rights within slavery in comparison to the copious mandates regarding indigenous labor and Indian governance” (124). Slaves had a weaker legal position than Andeans from which to contest the labor exactions of their owners or overseers. Additionally, their masters often controlled the courts, so slaves more often used extralegal means to resist. O’Toole observes that slaves’ movement was rarely monitored in northern Peru, a finding that may surprise students of slavery in other regions. Instead slaveholders were intent on controlling their slaves’ time, and slaves developed their own notions of acceptable work sched-

ules. Others took flight and then claimed they were looking for a new owner in response to abuse. O'Toole concludes that Andeans' and Afro-Peruvians' agency, employed within the colonial framework of *casta* and slavery, was intended to protect their communities and families and to assert what autonomy they could over labor demands and discriminatory justice. But in the process of using the colonial frame, though they had little other choice if they hoped to survive, they "[made] colonialism and slavery . . . [and] helped make what we would come to know as race" (170). Such a conclusion brought this reader up short. On further reflection it is hard to see how another conclusion is possible if we accept the oppressive nature of slavery, the severe consequences of testing its limits for slaves, and the participation of all parties in constructing cultures, however unequal their locations. Yet, O'Toole's bald statement of the participation of the oppressed in creating the system that oppressed them is likely to rankle some readers.

Through excerpts from archival documents, García Rodríguez's *Voices of the Enslaved in Nineteenth-Century Cuba* shows Cuban slaves' efforts to carve out lives with a modicum of autonomy and dignity.⁷ García Rodríguez provides a detailed introduction that covers main themes in the historiography and gives a useful synthesis of the evolution of slavery in the Cuban economy, though the excerpts themselves do not have editorial introductions. In reviewing slavery's development in Cuba, the author does a skillful job of pointing out that slavery was not imposed by physical violence alone. She illuminates "the complex nature of decision making that was necessary at every level [of a plantation] in order to maintain a stable equilibrium of opposing forces" (21). Several quotes from documents highlight slave owners' comprehension of the limits of their power and the dangers of pushing slaves to desperation by imposing new labor exactions or transgressing norms of treatment. The excerpts are organized by themes, many of which are covered in other works under review: slave laws and codes, slavery and family life, plantation social networks, masters' violence, and slaves' flight and rebellion. The evidence in these documents supports the conclusion of other authors discussed here that slaves understood and employed the Spanish legal system to protest perceived transgressions of norms and secure what advantage they could.

For both students and specialists the chapter of excerpts on *coartación* will be of particular interest. The documents show the operation of this practice of slaves purchasing their freedom in installments that in theory allowed them to claim as their own the portion of their freedom they had already purchased. García Rodríguez rightly argues that the practice came about "through slaves' determined resistance in which they exercised an intelligent and tenacious exploitation of those judicial channels that were readily available to them" (42). Yet one might surmise that *coartación* served masters' interests to some degree as well, though she does not say so. She concludes that all of slaves' efforts "did nothing to eradicate the inexorable nature of servitude and its attendant consequences" (43).

Ian Read's *The Hierarchies of Slavery* consciously returns to a more sociologi-

7. This book was originally published in Spanish as *La esclavitud desde la esclavitud: La visión de los siervos* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigación Científica Ing. Jorge L. Tamayo, 1996).

cal study of slavery and the constraints of the system, though he does not deny slaves' efforts to shape their lives. His amassing of data from archival sources shows the potential of statistics to temper the challenges of relying on anecdotal evidence. His unit of analysis is a single township in southeastern Brazil in the period after independence but before abolition (1822–1888), a significantly different setting, geographically and chronologically, from the other works under review. The wealth of sources preserved from the town of Santos in this period allows Read to reconstruct owners' and slaves' residential patterns by neighborhood, occupation, and civil status and then map evidence from such sources as wills, bills of sale, and newspaper ads for fugitive slaves onto that grid. He argues that this method reveals that "slaves were unequally bound" (176), that hierarchies developed within enslavement based largely on the wealth and status of one's owner. This book is full of insights generated by the careful sifting of mountains of evidence.

For instance, he contends that slave marriages were not determined only by slaves' degree of adoption of Catholicism or desire to establish families and kinship networks. In Santos at least, marriage seems to have been a privilege open mostly to those enslaved by wealthy owners. Large, well-resourced households had less turnover among their enslaved workers and the owners could pay church fees, if necessary. Fertility and childbearing, however, were widespread among slaves across the income categories of their owners, which suggests that researching marriage records alone may tell us mostly about the family lives of a relatively privileged group among the enslaved.

Read's combined discussion of flight and manumission unearths interesting insights into how the system of slavery channeled impulses for relief from its weight. Manumission was more likely for creole women, infants, and children; for those with closer relationships with their masters who might be rewarded for loyal service; or for those with access to jobs to earn their purchase price. As other scholars have noted, manumission often came with strings attached, such as a sum of money to be paid or a period of continued service before full freedom was granted. Read raises the interesting possibility that masters sometimes used manumission letters as a form of labor contract, an insight that could be lost if the focus is only on slaves' motivations. Such an insight could be usefully explored in the case of *coartación* as well. Read's section on slave punishment is less satisfying than other parts of the book because it focuses exclusively on a relatively small number of slaves who were arrested and incarcerated in the town jail, though his point that slave owners began to rely more on state institutions for punishment suggests the need to investigate this practice in other settings.

Interestingly, Read's emphasis on masters' wealth and status and the resultant hierarchies within slavery lead him to a conclusion remarkably similar to other authors here reviewed who premised their work on the need to highlight the agency of the enslaved. For Read, slaves' opportunities to improve their lives under slavery often "rested upon their acquiescence to the larger structures of power" (202). To put a sharper point on it, he raises the question, "Are we able to productively recount and engage with the forces that made slavery oppressive when nearly all interactions between slaves and masters are probed for signs of

'negotiation' or 'resistance'?" Though a few were able to challenge the system and make meaningful decisions, most "simply tried to survive against terrible odds" (203).

Like Read's book, most of Sarah Franklin's *Women and Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Colonial Cuba* focuses on elites and their ideologies of domination. Her work can be usefully compared to the essays by Morrison and Reid-Vazquez discussed above. All three foreground gender and its intersections with race and class. Where Morrison and Reid-Vazquez highlight cases of transgression of norms, often by people of color, Franklin emphasizes the power of patriarchy employed by whites to order a slave society. She devotes considerable space to Cuban elites' published discourses on gender norms for marriage and motherhood, on charity for poor and orphaned women and girls, and on education. Specialists will find few surprises in these chapters, though students may find the overview and bibliography useful. White women are controlled by the men in their lives and by a paternalistic state; they adopt patriarchal discourse to plead for protection and redress. A more interesting chapter speculates about the role of wet nurses of color in a patriarchal slave society that idealized motherhood for white women but routinely paid enslaved wet nurses to carry out the most intimate of motherly duties. Franklin has sufficient evidence to prove the power of patriarchal norms; one hopes future scholars will add in the kinds of evidence provided by Morrison and Reid-Vazquez of disruption of norms to probe more fully the constraints and the porosity of boundaries of gender, race, and class.

Of all the authors discussed here, only Ana Lucia Araujo deals with public representations of slavery and the slave trade in the present day. She shows that the deep-rooted binaries of interpretation that have shaped the field of slavery studies also animate slavery's meanings in commemorations, museums, and monuments in Brazil and Benin. The book still bears some of the earmarks of its origins as a dissertation, with many pages of literature reviews on memory and history, the fierce debates about the numbers of people lost to Africa through the transatlantic slave trade, and slavery studies in Brazil. Araujo also narrates Brazil's and Benin's histories of slavery and decolonization and abolition in both regions, and offers overviews of contemporary politics, which students and nonspecialists may find useful.

Fresh insights abound in the sections on the renovation of slave trade sites in Africa and the politics of claiming or denying descent from the enslaved or their enslavers. Araujo shows the fundamental role played by UNESCO from the 1970s onward in designating and funding efforts to preserve sites and commemorate slavery in Africa and the Americas. For example, the House of Slaves on Senegal's Gorée Island with its dungeons and "Door of No Return" has become the embodiment of the horrors of Atlantic slavery and a pilgrimage site for tourists and dignitaries. Yet, as Araujo explains, the site's "notoriety . . . largely relies on the performance developed by Boubacar Joseph N'Diaye," Gorée's longtime curator (59). Historians have challenged many of the details of N'Diaye's narration. For instance, though historians have estimated that close to 33,000 slaves were shipped from the island, N'Diaye claimed that ten to fifteen million slaves passed through Gorée's doors, touching off a bitter debate about the boundaries between

history and memory. The site's myth has magnified its meaning in memories of slavery and far superseded its history.

The last four chapters of *Public Memory of Slavery* examine the divergent approaches to the slave past in Brazil and Benin. According to Araujo, Brazil's deeply held mythology of racial democracy and harmony allowed extensive efforts to celebrate Brazilians' cultural connections to Africa but almost no public space to highlight "the deep impact of the Atlantic slave trade and slavery in Brazilian society" (119). The few public monuments to slavery are figures of heroic fighters against slavery, such as Zumbi, a maroon leader. In Benin, on the other hand, public monuments tend to highlight the slave as victim, yet most descendants of slaves foreground ancestors who were heroic resisters. Araujo offers two fascinating chapters on descendants of African-born slaves who lived part of their lives in Brazil and then either forcibly or voluntarily migrated back to African coastal cities such as Ouidah. Complexities of identity, history, and memory are revealed through personal interviews in which currently wealthy descendants of slaves are willing to claim enslaved ancestry, while less well-off descendants still fear the stigma of such connections. Even wealthy descendants of slave merchants are also able to rehabilitate and memorialize their family histories and turn their homes into tourist stops. Readers will find much food for thought in the "plural and conflictive slave pasts" (138) examined by Araujo.

The authors of the essays and books reviewed above study systems of domination in colonial Ibero-America that subordinated enslaved Africans and their descendants, colonized Andeans, and women. In most of this scholarship, subordinated people speak, they advocate for themselves and their families and communities, but they use the discourse of paternalism and their subordination to do so. The main bone of contention for most of the authors seems to be whether adopting the ways of oppressors constitutes acceptance and assimilation or a savvy manipulation and negotiation. The rather grim conclusions of these works suggest that survival demanded both.