and the status of the political center in general. Land reform thus became a lever for the development of the rural cooperativism in which he believed and for the prosperity of Mexico, and was upheld as a promise that, as it was made to the people, none of the subsequent presidents would be able to deny.

However, as Wolfe writes, this approach was costly to implement, both in regard to the environment and the region's inhabitants, as it forced tens of thousands of *ejidatarios* to live in destitution and poverty. In his view, if the Nazas project had been supported by a more effective system of water transportation to the fields, by systematically infiltrating waters into the aquifers, finding alternative water sources to cover probable dry seasons when the dam was not filled, and if pumping had been executed more carefully, Cárdenas could have more effectively addressed the residential density. The approach suggested by Wolfe might not have completely saved the enterprise of settling the region, the dimensions of which in any case were larger than its absorptive capacity, even after huge governmental investments and constant attempts to correct the deficiencies, such as the *Tlahualilo* project, but it would certainly have eased it.

Wolff's book is interesting, convincing, and challenging. It is thorough, focused, and appropriately backed by statistical data, governmental papers, professional reports, minutes of meetings and conferences, newspaper articles, and private letters that were published over almost a century. However, I find two lacunae in the book. The first is due consideration of the complex social and political context of the *cardenismo* and its unique populism. The second is the absence of a comparative approach. Large dams and "revolutionary" irrigation systems were established elsewhere in Mexico, some by Cárdenas himself. From this point of view, it would have been appropriate to pay attention to the "soft" approach to *watering* in Mexico that Wolfe mentions in his introduction. A comparative study could suggest other perspectives regarding the hydraulic projects of the Mexican revolution, and thus soften a little the harsh conclusions emerging from Wolfe's *Watering the Revolution*.

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LAMONTE AIDOO, ***SLAVERY UNSEEN: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History***. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018.

Lamonte Aidoo's goal in *Slavery Unseen* is to "read the story of Brazilian slavery against the silence, contradictions, shame, and concealment surrounding the black body" (p. 10). His approach consists in focusing chapters on particular areas of exploitation in slavery and post-abolition that relate to sex and violence,

often within same-sex relationships. He completely reverses the narrative of "racial democracy" that has dominated most of the literature related to the history of Brazilian race relations and reframes it as a history of exploitation. His methodology is narrative and primarily based on textual accounts such as Inquisition records. He argues that it is impossible to assign frequency to any of these events and some of his argument relies on reactions to works of fiction that depict slaves or white men in ways that readers found objectionable. While the book has a specific focus and uses individual stories to make its arguments, it is also in many ways a general discussion of Brazilian history and society. Aidoo discusses the actual history of slavery in rather summary fashion and makes an argument on race relations and passing which returns to historical discussions of comparative slavery and race relations in the U.S. and Brazil. He also includes two chapters focusing on post-abolition policies that are intrinsically racist. This book is less an historical study than an interpretation of Brazilian violence and sexuality in history.

Aidoo's focus on the particular conditions of the "many slaveries" in Brazil links to different cultural, geographical, and social contexts. The "slaveries" also elucidate the particular forms of exploitation shown in each chapter. In this approach, Aidoo emphasizes the power differential between slave and free, but also the effect of areas of "sameness" (for example, the ownership of slaves by free black slave masters, or interracial power relations within a single gender). He argues that "sex was necessarily central to both the institution of slavery and . . . the construction of the myth of racial democracy" (p. 25). He believes that the conflation of interracial sex and antiracism still persists today and obscures forms of exploitation and violence. Racial and sexual violence pervade Aidoo's narrative while he argues against the myth of racial democracy.

In the chapter on social whiteness, Aidoo addresses relations between slaves and free people of African descent to show how "whites retained control over who could pass as white and who could not." Passing functioned as a "mechanism of containment, both securing the loyalty of black passers and upholding their preexisting racially based power and privilege" (118). The idea that blacks and mulattos are only white as long as whites are in agreement with their whiteness, so that "passing" itself is contingent and unstable, is crucial to Aidoo's analysis. The passing had to work in agreement with the social order. Thus, the social whiteness which confused so many European travelers in the nineteenth century allowed many nonwhites to participate in professions such as writer, doctor, lawyer, politician, or to serve in the militia. The famous Brazilian author Machado de Assis was a known mulatto but the abolitionist Joaquim Nabuco said in his praise of Machado de Assis that any mention of his race would diminish his social and literary prominence. In Nabuco's eyes, Machado's fame and

talent could not coexist with his black ancestry. Even though blacks attained freedom or had white blood, the racial ideas that formed the basis of slavery had to remain intact in order to maintain white supremacy.

In "O Diabo Preto (the Negro Devil): The Myth of the Black Homosexual Predator in the Age of Social Hygiene" Aidoo discusses the social-hygiene movement of the last half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. While public health and sanitation were central to this movement the focus also included social problems and relied on science and medicine for solutions. Problems considered were promiscuity, prostitution, homosexuality, alcoholism, and mental illness. Aidoo argues that "it was during this period that doctors and writers . . . most clearly articulated the connection between sex, sexuality, and race and their centrality to Brazilian national identity" (150). Leaders were intent on showing the degeneracy and deviancy of Black Brazilians and the poor. They were seen as genetically predisposed to mental illness, vagrancy, prostitution, and homosexuality. These characteristics were considered to be contagious and to pose a threat to the white elite and nation. As progress was viewed as a product of white male virility, issues of race and homosexuality threatened that progress. Homosexuality was defined as the "destruction of society." This idea became an obsessive focus of medical science in the nineteenth century.

In the last chapter Aidoo uses the biography of the eighteenth-century slave woman Chica da Silva, also examining modern-day films about her to reflect on continued attitudes toward race, sex, and violence in Brazil. This use of fiction along with earlier discussions of nineteenth-century fiction on race and homosexuality show how Aidoo sees popular culture as an illustration of the predominant Brazilian narrative on race and sexuality. This especially pertains to homosexual relations between black and white men, which is regarded as an illness and a danger for the progress of the Brazilian nation. This book is not, and is not intended, to be an unbiased historical account of slavery and its abuses in Brazil. Instead, it is an eloquent interpretation of many insidious aspects of slavery that went beyond the legal relationship between "slave" and "free," and included many varieties of exploitation and violence. Lamonte Aidoo sees these largely unseen means of exploitation based on race and power as also surviving in modern Brazil.

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