

Nicole Saffold Maskiell, *Bound By Bondage: Slavery and the Creation of a Northern Gentry* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2022, 306 pp., ISBN 9781501764240).

Scholarly attention by historians of slavery has recently turned to the Northern United States, providing readers with crucial new understandings of its social, political, and economic impact, for both the region and the US as a whole. Similarly, historians, many of whom are Black women, have taken up the call to more deeply interrogate antebellum-based data guided by Saidiya Hartman's method of 'critical fabulation' ('Venus in Two Acts', 2008) and attend to affect, kinship, and the solidification of enslaving regimes and resistance to them by the enslaved. And finally, a recent wealth of scholarship addressing Dutch enslaving specifically has emerged by scholars revealing important insights into the worlds of Dutch enslavers, those enslaved by them, and how slavery impacted the Dutch economy. Nicole Saffold Maskiell's *Bound By Bondage* lies at the intersections of these literatures, featuring critically important scholarly work attending to the role of kinship bonds as central to enslaving and the subsequent social, political, and economic development of European colonies, global racial capitalism, and enslaved resistance.

Mining archival materials from across the Dutch Atlantic world, Maskiell, an associate professor of History and Peter and Bonnie McCausland Faculty Fellow at the University of South Carolina, centers and considers experiences of the enslaved, and their families, alongside those of enslaving Dutch settler colonists to reveal how kinship bonds perpetuated enslaving structures and practices. The book moves chronologically and is centered around major themes, the first three of which are in Dutch – 'Neger', 'Kolonist', and 'Naam' [Black, Colonist, Name] – the last four in English – Bond, Family, Market, Identity. As Maskiell notes, using Dutch chapter names symbolically indicates the influence and longevity of Dutch familial political, customary rule and influence. Tracing the processes in which these concepts developed in the Dutch and then later British colonial milieu of the North Atlantic, historically between the 1640s and 1760s, *Bound By Bondage* provides essential links between Dutch enslavers and traders and the larger Atlantic enslaving world of New Netherland, New England, the Americas, the Caribbean, and Africa.

Beginning with Dutch colonization of present-day New York, New Jersey, and Maryland, Maskiell centers, and begins each chapter with the enslaved and their experiences in this colonial landscape. Archival materials drawn on are vast – originating in the Netherlands, the US, and the Dutch

Caribbean and featuring, but not limited to, individual, family, and business records, colonial laws, debates, and political correspondence, newspapers, runaway notices, and US census data. Throughout the book, readers learn how, as settler colonists, in addition to enslavers, these Dutch families during and after the age of New Netherland, developed and implemented the structure of settler colonialism and racial capitalism that would shape what is now the US into the present.

Central to the book is how elite Dutch families marshaled their networks ‘for a dual purpose – not just to grow power and connection among other elites across the Northeast, but also to constrain and marginalize those they enslaved, particularly as fears of rebellion and threats of violence became more widespread’ (163). Mastery of the enslaved aligned with the mastery over the land essential to settler colonialism and, as Maskiell demonstrates, represented ‘a vital component in their strategy for survival’ (41). Dutch enslavers, many also serving in colonial governance, closed off avenues for emancipation to safeguard their status, power, and wealth. Indeed, the enslaved represented a particular form of social status, and Dutch settlers ‘used enslaved people to project power in a way that land, commodities, and investments could not, because they were a form of movable property that could be *moved*’ (82, emphasis in original). Importantly, women, and their family and friendship networks, feature prominently throughout the book.

Enslaving also solidified bonds among settlers, both Dutch and non-Dutch, inside and outside of the centers of Dutch population, resulting in a mutually reinforcing system wherein they could both preserve and enhance family ties while cementing their social position in a rapidly changing settler colonial landscape. These Dutch ‘interconnected family units’ provided them with access to markets and resources, and provided a vector along which they could exert mastery. The enslaved people who served them were viewed as engines of growth, providing much-needed skills and labor that fueled their burgeoning empires, as the gentry united in ‘a common language of control’ (163). Enslaving became a, if not the, central mechanisms to acquire, enhance, and showcase wealth and status, often through marriage or other family ties, inheritance and gifting of the enslaved at one’s death, and the loaning out of enslaved people, especially children, to family members. This simultaneously transferred enslaving practices, wealth, and power intergenerationally along these familial lines.

*Bound By Bondage* also provides crucial insights into how racial meanings and understandings among Europeans, Dutch and others, developed during this era, deepening the meanings of differential humanity, Blackness, and whiteness. For example, Dutch enslaving settlers’ affective disgust with the enslaved developed into concretized racial logics and practices through a reactive process as new settlers were socialized to this ‘new world’ of racism and oppression, status, and wealth. These practices coalesced

into the surveillance and legal regimes that holistically shaped the lives of the enslaved and their families, and developed into local contemporary racialized social, political, and economic structure and culture.

Dutch settlers were not the only ones to mobilize kinship networks for their own benefit. Enslaved and free Black people developed and mobilized their own, *and* their enslavers', kinship networks, for their own violent and non-violent resistance purposes, ranging from self-expression, to trade, to destruction of property and insurrection. Maskiell excavates the lives of the enslaved by reconstructing 'names and struggles of those enslaved to offer a multigenerational, and oftentimes migrational, portrait of enslaved families and individuals who loved, lived, negotiated, resisted, and died due to the conscious actions and ambitions of their enslavers' (12). Offering a rich portrait of Black communities and individuals amid settler enslavers, Maskiell provides crucially important insights throughout the book into the lives, kinship networks, and resistance strategies of the enslaved during this period.

The enslaved constantly and innovatively resisted their bondage. While some methods targeted the profits of the enslaving system, such as sabotage and work slowdowns, other forms of resistance responded explicitly to increasing Black codes enacted to limit Black autonomy. Maskiell demonstrates how, regardless of method, the enslaved relied on networks and knowledge gained through their, and their enslavers', kinship bonds to resist. Black peoples' use of colonial courts reveal intricate knowledge of the juridical system holding them in captivity. Networks developed with local and regional Indigenous communities, alongside fluency in multiple African languages, and geographic knowledge of the land, sea, marshes, and broader terrain of their immediate and distant surroundings, created expansive, sometimes national, networks in which enslaved and free Black peoples lived and operated. This 'skillful manipulation of environmental and social geographies, so central to enslaved escape plans... [and] the similarity and centrality of networks – between kin, friends and customers, religious and secular communities – was a language that both enslaver and enslaved held in common' (145).

I recommend Maskiell's highly readable *Bound By Bondage*, and have already done so to numerous colleagues and students, at my own institution and at conferences. For those seeking an entry point into this area of historiography, the Introduction and first chapter alone would serve scholars and students well. The book will be of particular interest to those seeking to understand the development of enslaving in the Atlantic, particularly Dutch Atlantic, world, the development of enslaving in the Northern us, and the role of kinship bonds in enslaving and resistance. It provides holistic and deep understanding of the ways in which the enslaving world, of both enslavers and the enslaved, were shaped by interpersonal and family ties and connections to show how enslaving was

deeply personal, intentionally enacted on a daily basis, to provide not only personal, but familial wealth and social status. It's also a model of engaging data to tell the stories not only of enslavers, but the enslaved during this critical early enslaving period.

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