

# Black Purgatory: Enslaved Women's Resistance in Nineteenth-Century Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

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*This article explores the cases of two Brazilian-born enslaved women who were convicted of infanticide and murder in the city of Porto Alegre (Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil) in the 1820s. Maria was convicted of slitting the throats of her two children with her master's razor. Mônica was convicted of killing her master, André Dias, with five axe blows. Although the crimes these two women perpetrated differed in some ways, their sentences were similar. They were not sentenced to death, the typical fate of enslaved individuals who committed murder. Instead, they were publicly flogged then sent into *degredo* (penal exile) in Benguela, two Portuguese colonies in West Central Africa. These cases suggest that in the context of slavery in Rio Grande do Sul, the limited possibilities of negotiation between masters and slaves resulted in enslaved women committing violent acts of individual resistance, which, although apparently desperate acts, were also the result of a larger strategy. The article shows that in both prosperous and poor households in the domestic environment, enslaved women experienced various forms of daily violence. It also sheds light on how early in Rio Grande do Sul's history, public defenders started condemning physical violence by slave owners against enslaved women, and how the judicial system recognized the legitimacy of their arguments by sentencing the women to penal exile rather than the death penalty. For the two unmarried enslaved women who were constant victims of abuse, and who very probably did not have any close relatives, being exiled to Benguela was perhaps a blessing in disguise.*

Over the last three decades, the alleged paucity of primary sources has justified the small number of book-length studies exploring the history of enslaved women in Brazil.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, most recent scholarship on slavery in Brazil has emphasized the ways enslaved women coped with the hardships of slavery by taking advantage of

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their sexuality, expressing loyalty to their masters in order to seduce them or gain their confidence and thereby be granted or purchase their freedom.<sup>2</sup> Among the rare existing works, very few examined how enslaved women responded to slavery by employing violent means.<sup>3</sup> This article aims to contribute to filling this gap by exploring two cases of Brazilian-born enslaved women who were convicted of murder and infanticide in the city of Porto Alegre (Rio Grande do Sul) in 1822. Although these women were not engaged in collective resistance by leading rebellions or forming *quilombos*, their crimes can be understood as individual acts of resistance that provide evidence of the limited possibilities they had to negotiate better treatment and living conditions. Over the following decades, their actions were emulated by other enslaved women and certainly contributed to disturb the Rio Grande do Sul slave system.

Maria, an enslaved woman owned by Captain José Bittencourt Cidade, was convicted of slitting the throats of her two children (Manoela and Manoel) with her master's razor. The criminal proceedings also indicated that her mistress and her master, who was probably the father of the two children, consistently subjected her to physical violence. Mônica, another *crioula* enslaved woman born in Rio de Janeiro and living in the nearby *vila* (town) of Rio Grande, was convicted of killing her master, André Dias, with five axe blows. The criminal records suggest that Mônica was the only slave owned by Dias, a modest carpenter. Dias was attacked during the night, after he and Mônica drank a large amount of *cachaça* together, as was their custom.<sup>4</sup> A *preto forro* (black freedman) named José dos Orfãos found the dying Dias and brought Mônica to the police. According to him, she initially declared that she had killed her master because he threatened to beat her the next day, as he usually did when he was drunk. But later under interrogation, Mônica claimed that Dias fell out of bed and landed on the axe blade. Although the crimes perpetrated by these two women differed, their sentences were similar. Convicted of serious crimes, they were not sentenced to death.<sup>5</sup> Instead, they were publicly flogged then sent into *degredo* (penal exile) in Angola or Benguela, two Portuguese colonies in West Central Africa.

To contextualize these two cases, this article discusses the broad context of slavery in the captaincy of Rio Grande do Sul, a region that has been neglected in English-language scholarship on slavery in Brazil. The first part engages with historians who have underscored the brutality of Rio Grande do Sul's slave system and the various ways the enslaved population (typically men) responded to daily violence and negotiated better living conditions.<sup>6</sup> By focusing on crimes committed by enslaved individuals, the second part discusses how enslaved women living and working in domestic environments, just like their male counterparts, reacted against slavery by using violence. Finally, drawing on documents housed at the Arquivo Público do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul (APERS) in Porto Alegre, the article explores the criminal proceedings against the two aforementioned enslaved women, who were convicted in 1822 of murders committed in 1819 and 1820. Even though criminal proceedings, like all official written sources, record the biased perspective of men in power, they are among the few documents that enable us to hear, albeit indirectly, the voices of the enslaved population.

### Black purgatory or pastoral democracy?

Although commercially connected to southeastern Brazil, early-nineteenth-century Porto Alegre was a small colonial town.<sup>7</sup> In 1820, its population was estimated at 10,000 to 12,000, much less than the population of the capital Rio de Janeiro, which in 1821 had 86,323 residents.<sup>8</sup> French traveler and naturalist Auguste Saint-Hilaire (1779–1853), who visited the town in 1820–1821, observed that Porto Alegre's population consisted predominantly of enslaved blacks and white individuals, who according to him were present in the city in considerable numbers, with 'very few mulattos ... seen here'.<sup>9</sup> Like travelers in other Brazilian cities, Saint-Hilaire remarked on the presence of blacks in the streets: 'The Rua da Praia, which is the only commercial street, is very bustling. There are many people walking or on horseback, sailors and many blacks carrying various burdens'.<sup>10</sup> Saint-Hilaire also explained that, as in Rio de Janeiro, most vendors in the central market were blacks: 'many traders squat, close to the goods they sell; others have stands, arranged in a disorganized way in the market's courtyard'.<sup>11</sup> But Saint-Hilaire's impressions regarding slavery in the captaincy were rather ambiguous. Even though he acknowledged that the slaves sent to the then captaincy of Rio Grande do Sul were those unsuited to work in Rio de Janeiro, he also praised the living conditions of slaves in the region, becoming one of the first authors to promote the idea that Rio Grande do Sul was a 'pastoral democracy' where masters and slaves worked together in the fields and maintained cordial and cooperative relations:

there is not, I believe, in all Brazil, a place where the slaves are more happy than in this captaincy. The masters work as hard as the slaves, keep themselves close to them and treat them with less disdain. The slave eats as much meat he wants, he is not poorly dressed, does not walk, and his main occupation is to gallop through the fields, something more healthy than fatiguing. At last he feels superior to the animals that surround him, comforting his low condition, elevating himself in his own eyes.<sup>12</sup>

However, when Saint-Hilaire visited the zone of *charqueadas* (jerked beef factories) in the south of the captaincy, his idyllic vision of slavery drastically changed.<sup>13</sup> He observed that unlike on the *estâncias* (ranches), in the *charqueadas* 'the negroes are treated with rudeness'.<sup>14</sup> He reported that his host, who according to him 'was one of the most humane *charqueadores*, only speaks with his slaves with exaggerated severity, in which he is imitated by his wife; the slaves seem to fear their owners'.<sup>15</sup> But Saint-Hilaire justified the master's and mistress's attitudes by explaining that in the *charqueadas* the 'negroes are in great number and full of vices brought from the capital, which makes it necessary treat them more vigorously'.<sup>16</sup>

Another French traveler, Nicolau Dreys (1781–1843), who sojourned in Rio Grande do Sul between 1817 and 1825, also contributed to the myth of a 'pastoral democracy', repudiating the perception at the time that the region was a kind of 'purgatory for blacks'. Dreys states that in Rio Grande do Sul slaves were treated no worse than anywhere else, and that although they worked hard in *charqueadas*, the workload was not heavy or excessive.<sup>17</sup> Yet despite these benign assessments by contemporary European

observers, scholars such as Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Jacob Gorender, Mario Maestri and Décio Freitas helped to deconstruct this myth by demonstrating that the working conditions in the *charqueadas* were very hard, not only because of the unhealthy environment but also as a result of the region's cold and humid weather.<sup>18</sup>

### Providers of domestic and sexual services

In the rural areas of Rio Grande do Sul, male slaves greatly outnumbered enslaved women. In most of the larger *estâncias* and *charqueadas*, enslaved women counted for less than one-third of the total slave population. Most enslaved women in both urban and rural environments performed domestic work, while a smaller number worked as street vendors or in the fields. All over Brazil, even though domestic slaves generally had better living conditions than the fieldworkers and urban slaves fared better than their rural counterparts, enslaved women were constantly beaten by their masters and mistresses. In both urban and rural Brazil, enslaved women also faced the constant threat of sexual violence from masters, the masters' male children, overseers and other white men. In the early eighteenth century, André João Antonil cited abuses perpetrated by the *feitores* (overseers) against enslaved women in Bahia. According to him, if an enslaved woman refused men's sexual advances, 'they could attack and whip [the woman] with a liana until she was bleeding profusely, and putting in the *tronco* or attached in a chain for months (when the master is in the city)'.<sup>19</sup> It was common practice for enslaved female maids, often Brazilian-born mulattos, to become 'mistresses or common-law wives of their owners, serving as supervisors of other slaves, washerwomen, cooks, housekeepers, and wet nurses (*amas de leite*) for the owners' legitimate children'.<sup>20</sup> The French traveler Charles Expilly underscored that owning a wet nurse was an indicator of social status and that 'the luxury of the wet nurse indicates how prosperous the household is'.<sup>21</sup> This idea is confirmed by Sandra Lauderdale Graham who explains that especially the *mucamas* (domestic enslaved women), who were in permanent contact with their masters and mistresses, 'could expect finer clothes, perhaps a more varied or ample diet gleaned from the family's table, earlier attention to illness, and the small, sought-after protections a proper mistress or master was supposed to provide'.<sup>22</sup> Travelers like Expilly also highlighted the alleged privileged position of wet nurses, who according to him were able to sexually manipulate their masters and could 'satisfy their sensuality, and for a short period of time live according to their fantasies without fearing being punished'.<sup>23</sup> As Graham notes, however, these privileges had a price: *mucamas* were expected to be loyal, and they lived under constant surveillance. In this context, loyalty also meant passive acceptance of sexual abuse, often beginning in childhood and sometimes with the promise of eventual manumission.<sup>24</sup>

In Brazil, enslaved men and women sought various ways to escape the hardships of slavery. Despite scant documentary evidence that enslaved women participated in collective resistance, like the organization of *quilombos* (runaway slave communities) and slave rebellions in Brazil, individually they did resist in many other ways, including

running away, committing suicide and infanticide, or killing their masters and the masters' children.<sup>25</sup> As Solimar Oliveira de Lima has shown, between 1818 and 1833, 50 percent of the homicides perpetrated by enslaved men and women in Rio Grande do Sul were committed against masters or *feitores*.<sup>26</sup> Whereas scholars examining female slave resistance in regions like Bahia and Rio de Janeiro have found very few criminal proceedings against enslaved women who killed their own children or the children of their masters, the situation seems to have been very different in Rio Grande do Sul.<sup>27</sup> Between 1822 and 1888, the year slavery was abolished in Brazil, several enslaved women in Rio Grande do Sul killed their own children to save them from mistreatment, whereas others attempted to murder or succeeded in murdering their masters or the master's family.<sup>28</sup>

Enslaved women lived in close proximity to their mistresses and the latter's children, affording them several opportunities to avenge physical mistreatment and psychological abuse through murder. The working and living conditions of enslaved women apparently did not improve over time, because harsher criminal codes did not staunch the attempted homicides against masters and their families. Court records also document several examples of female slaves committing suicide, very often by hanging themselves on quince, peach or fig trees. Unlike in Bahia and Rio de Janeiro, in Rio Grande do Sul there were also several cases of single enslaved women killing their own infants, who, like them, were victims of physical abuse and often the product of rape. Although these individual acts did not alter Rio Grande do Sul's slave system, they expressed resistance in its most violent form.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the judicial system was forced to recognize these violent acts as responses to physical mistreatment, often commuting the sentences of enslaved women found guilty of homicide or infanticide.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, there were numerous criminal proceedings in Rio Grande do Sul against slave owners who physically abused or killed their slaves. Yet even when there was abundant physical evidence of abuse, slave owners, unsurprisingly, were almost never convicted.

### Crime and punishment

In March 1819, Maria was not more than 24 years of age.<sup>30</sup> Like almost all other young women born into slavery, she did not know her exact age. In the existing criminal records, she identifies herself as a *crioula* (Brazilian-born enslaved woman) born in the *vila* of Rio Grande.<sup>31</sup> She lived in Rio dos Sinos, in the household of her owner, Captain José Bittencourt Cidade (ca. 1775–1824). Bittencourt Cidade was the son of a Portuguese man and a woman from the Azores who immigrated to Brazil. Born in Florianópolis (Desterro) in the then captaincy of Santa Catarina, in 1793, he married a white woman, Angélica Velosa da Fontoura Azambuya.<sup>32</sup> The couple's postmortem inventory shows that by the time that Maria committed infanticide, the couple had 5 sons aged between 10 and 20 years old, and a daughter aged 8 years old. Also, in addition to Maria and her two children, the couple owned 28 enslaved men, women and children of various ages, born both in Brazil and in

various parts of Africa. In addition, Bittencourt Cidade was the owner of a large estate, other real estate and a considerable number of cattle.<sup>33</sup>

Maria probably performed domestic service, cleaning, cooking and sewing. It would not be surprising if she also provided sexual services to the master, his sons and other male individuals who resided in the estate. Despite being single, Maria had two young children, also enslaved, a *crioulinho* called Manoel and a *crioulinha* called Manoella, two very common Portuguese names. Like most enslaved individuals in Brazil at the time, Maria was illiterate. According to the *auto de prisão, hábito e tonsura*, she was of average height, and after having two children her body was stout. She had a 'round face, curly hair, thin eyebrows, black eyes, thick lips, and a flat nose'.<sup>34</sup>

Like other cases of enslaved women who committed infanticide in other regions of South America, available sources are silent regarding the history leading up to the crime.<sup>35</sup> However, the killings were evidently premeditated because on 14 March, Maria took her master's razor to her room. On 15 March 1819 around 7:00 a.m., Maria and her two children were in her bedroom, close to the kitchen, in her master's house. When Maria's son did not appear for work at the appointed time, the mistress and the other house slaves started a search. They discovered Maria and her two children all with their throats slit: the two children died, but she survived.

Arrested and interrogated the same day, Maria confirmed that she killed her children with her master's razor, then slit her own throat. But she claimed that she had no reason to murder them, and that her intention was rather to kill herself. When asked if she and her children were well treated by her master and mistress, she briefly answered yes, but then added that 'all that her fellow slaves did wrong was imputed to her', suggesting she was at least scapegoated. After Maria's interrogation, 30 other witnesses testified.<sup>36</sup> Twenty-one of these witnesses identified themselves as white men and farmers, but several of them signed their testimony with a cross, indicating they were illiterate. In addition, two white women and seven black or *pardo* freedmen were called as witnesses. These individuals were certainly closely associated with the white witnesses and the master's family, but none of them were present at the crime scene and did not provide any specific information about the case.

Although most of the witnesses did not provide substantive testimony, Francisca Maria Oliveira (witness no. 1) was an exception. A married woman aged 40, Oliveira was a *comadre* (ritual godparent) of Maria's masters.<sup>37</sup> After the criminal proceedings were read, Francisca started describing what happened that day. She declared that she arrived at the house after the crimes had been committed. She reported being told by people who were present at the crime scene that when Dona Angelica, Maria's mistress, woke up that morning and did not see the *crioulinho* (the slave boy Manoel) present to perform his daily duties, she started looking for Maria and her children, initially assuming that she had run away with them. Only sometime later did the mistress hear what she thought was the *crioulinho's* voice screaming that his mother was trying to kill him. The door to Maria's bedroom was eventually broken down. The *crioulinha* (slave girl) was discovered dead and Manoel was wounded but still alive. Oliveira stated that someone in the room asked Manoel who had attacked him; he responded that it was his mother, showing his fingers cut by a razor blade and explaining that he was hurt

trying to defend himself. Witness no. 5, Marcelino Luiz d'Ávila, a 40-year-old white farmer, married, and a neighbor of Maria's owners, then picked up the story.<sup>38</sup> He stated that Dona Angélica sent a slave man called João to his home to inform him that her slave Maria had slit her own and her two children's throats, and to request that he serve as a witness. Marcelino went to the house of Bittencourt Cidade, who evidently was away from home. There he was told that Dona Angélica woke up in the morning and noticed that Maria and her two children were missing, which led her to assume that her female slave had run away with her two children. After searching for them for a time, they heard the *crioulinho* screaming and broke down the door of Maria's room, where they found the three of them with their throats cut but Maria and the boy still alive. He concluded his testimony by saying that he was unaware of the motivation for the crime.<sup>39</sup> Another witness, Esia Ursula d'Oliveira (witness no. 6), was a white widow who was visiting Bittencourt Cidade's farm.<sup>40</sup> Her testimony was very similar to Francisca's and Marcelino's, but although she declared that she never went close to Maria and the two children, she claimed to have seen the young Manoel 'full of blood and with this throat slit' hugging his mistress. She also said that when asked who did this to him, Manoel pointed to his mother. In conclusion, this witness was the only one to declare that when Maria was asked why she had done what she did, she answered that the 'Devil had tempted her'.<sup>41</sup> If true, this statement suggests that Maria strategically used Catholicism to provide a justification for her extreme act and alleviate her responsibility in the killing of her two children.

Almost three years after Maria had been arrested and interrogated, the facts of the crime established and all the witnesses heard, a legal representative (*curador*), Henrique da Silva Loureiro, was assigned to her. Loureiro prepared her defense, which was submitted to the *escrivão* Luis Antônio da Silva, to be added to the proceedings. In a moving narrative, he describes the 'sad scene of a mother perpetrating the homicide of her children and against herself', asking rhetorically what could have motivated her to perpetrate such 'horrible barbarity if not because she was furious or crazy or desperate'.<sup>42</sup> He then concluded that if she was crazy, she could not be found guilty, and if 'she was desperate because of a cruel bondage, she deserves commiseration'.<sup>43</sup> In his defense, Loureiro reviewed the various laws enacted since Roman times to protect against the mistreatment of slaves, including Antoninus Pius's law requiring a master guilty of cruelty against a slave to sell that slave.<sup>44</sup> In addition, Loureiro evoked the *alvará* (order) of 30 September 1693, forbidding the slaves to be chained at their master's will or in public prison, and that in prison they should not be kept restrained.<sup>45</sup> Following this introduction, Loureiro developed the argument that Maria had been mistreated by her owners, particularly her mistress:

Yes, it is evident that only the oppressive bondage and the effects of the cruel temper of her mistress, stripped of all humanity and full of presumption and pride, would be able to push her to the terrible attack and to total despair, to the point of losing reason. In fact, as stated in the inquiry only the extreme rigor of the punishments already suffered by the defendant and still feared by her, as she expected – when they were looking for her children, and claiming the misleading pretext of considering her fugitive – could result in an even more disastrous measure.<sup>46</sup>

Although the criminal proceedings do not mention Maria's mistress being questioned by the judge, it is curious that everyone in the house would assume that she had escaped with her children and took so long to look for her in her own bedroom. At the same time, the assumption that she run away raises the question of why she would escape with her two children if she had not been mistreated. In addition to focusing on the motivations behind Maria's extreme act, Loureiro also questioned the credibility of the various witnesses who were indeed *compadres*, *comadres* and *agregados* of the defendant's masters.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, probably in an attempt to attenuate her sentence, he insisted that Maria was desperate and her condition was close to madness:

the defendant's maternal arm could not be armed and strengthened to slit the throat of her innocent young daughter – who was forming herself and received all forms of care, attention, and love – or to turn against her son, and even though he was pleading for help; she could not be deaf to the sensitive nature's clamors and cries, and with horror of humanity employ a mortal blow, and finally revolt against herself, if there was not the most urgent and forcible cause alienating her from all reason, constituting a formal state of madness, and consulting the human heart, it strikes the eye, that only an abyss of evil could call another abyss of fatalities.<sup>48</sup>

Loureiro claimed that what provoked Maria's act of extreme desperation in committing infanticide and attempting suicide was the mistreatment and physical punishments that her master and mistress inflicted on her.<sup>49</sup> He asserted that her spirit was filled with the 'terror of lively torments and punishments' to the point that the day after the murders, when she was brought to Porto Alegre to initiate the *corpus delicti* and was questioned, she had stated that

the said masters treated her well, under the assumption that she would return to their control and would suffer the usual cruelties, when she was atrociously abused; but she then retracted the statement in the second interrogation when, recognizing her guilt and that she would not return to her old captivity, she revealed that she, desperate because of her mistress's mistreatment of her, had the intention to kill herself, but never her children, and it is totally acceptable that this true and honest retraction voids the first statement, and this is why the defendant's restitution is here implored, and that this benefit be granted because of her miserable condition, her sex, and because she was a minor less than 25 years old, at the time, and was taken by fear [ . . . ] worried by the dilacerations of her body because of the punishments, and her children without refuge or hope of improvement, and exposed only to arbitrary cruelty, the impulse of desperation and pain. Yes, these juridical arguments and legal presumptions constitute enough evidence to make it overall convincing, if it has not been omitted in the *corpus delicti*, the exam and the necessary and imperative inspection that has always been performed on the bodies of slaves in all cases of a similar nature to verify whether the mistreatments produced the fatal motivation and the slave's audacity.<sup>50</sup>

On 11 January 1822, the *acórdão* took the defense arguments into account, concurring that Maria was desperate because of the mistreatment her masters had inflicted upon her, which led her to commit 'parricide'. As a result the sentence read: 'The defendant will be led to the Praça da Força, around which she will turn three times, and will be punished with 500 lashes, then will be exiled for life to Benguela, and will pay the cost

of the criminal proceedings.<sup>51</sup> At the time, when a sentence established less than 1000 lashes, the convicted would usually receive 50 lashes per day.<sup>52</sup> In Porto Alegre, the Praça da Forca (Gallows Square), present-day Brigadeiro Sampaio Square, was situated close to the banks of the Guaíba River, where there was a large dock. Not far from there, across from the Church of Nossa Senhora das Dores was the *pelourinho*, an official whipping post, constructed in 1810, where individuals, especially slaves, convicted of crimes were publicly punished.<sup>53</sup> Some eight years later, when the French traveler, diplomat and naturalist Arsène Isabelle (1807–1888) visited Porto Alegre, he witnessed public floggings there:

Every day, from seven to eight in the morning, you can attend a bloody drama in Porto Alegre. At the beach, at the side of the arsenal, in front of a Church, ahead of the instrument of torture of a divine legislator, you will see a column rising above a mass of masonry, and at its foot, a shapeless mass, certainly something belonging to the animal kingdom, but you can not rank it among the bipeds and bimanans . . . It's a negro! A negro sentenced to two hundred, five hundred, a thousand or six thousand lashes! [. . .] the unfortunate has only mutilated limbs that one hardly recognizes as the bloody shreds of his withered skin.<sup>54</sup>

Even though the criminal proceedings clearly suggest that Maria's motive for infanticide was desperation resulting from physical punishments, a number of elements remain unclear. Maria's masters were not questioned during the criminal investigation; slaves were not permitted to testify under oath before a judge, even though they probably had relevant information. In addition, as her lawyer stated, Maria's body was not examined for any signs of physical mistreatment, other than the wounds on her neck. Indeed, in Rio Grande do Sul, there is no record prior to 1858 of enslaved women being physically examined for evidence of mistreatment.

According to the case proceedings, it was the mistress, Angélica, who mistreated Maria and may have had a sadistic relationship with her. Although violence perpetrated by mistresses against enslaved women remains an underexplored topic in the historiography of Brazilian slavery, Mary Karasch uncovered several cases of enslaved men and women who were severely beaten, tortured and killed by their mistresses during the first half of the nineteenth century in Rio de Janeiro, despite the prohibition of torture and whipping by Article 179 of the Constitution of 1824.<sup>55</sup> Likewise, Rio Grande do Sul's criminal records from the second half of the nineteenth-century document several cases of mistresses accused of severely beating their slaves, even though none was found guilty. For example, in 1880, Maria Rita, a *parda* single enslaved woman about thirty years old who worked as a cook and laundress, was severely beaten by her mistress Dona Felipa Teixeira de Moraes Lima. The mistress claimed the punishment was justified because Maria Rita had forgotten to take a pot of meat off the stove. Felipa was found guilty and imprisoned under Article 201 of the Criminal Code of 1830, which established that 'hurting or cutting any part of the human body, or inflicting any physical offense that causes pain to the person injured' would be punishable by between a month and a year in prison, and a fine corresponding to half that time.<sup>56</sup>

Relying on travel accounts, oral tradition and folklore, even Gilberto Freyre, whose controversial book *Casa-grande e senzala* emphasized the harmonious relations

between masters and slaves, provides numerous examples of how masters, and especially mistresses, inflicted physical punishments on enslaved women:

There are tales of *sinhá-moças* who had the eyes of pretty *mucamas* gouged out and then served to their husbands for dessert in a jelly dish, floating in blood that was still fresh. There are tales of young baronesses of adult age who out of jealousy or spite had fifteen-year-old mulatto girls sold off to old libertines. There were others who kicked out the teeth of their women slaves with their boots or had their breasts cut off, their nails drawn, or their faces and ears burned.<sup>57</sup>

According to European travelers who sojourned in Brazil during the nineteenth century, white mistresses often behaved sadistically toward their female slaves. The British traveler Henry Koster noted that on Brazilian plantations, white mistresses treated their slaves more harshly than the men. However, he still perceived these white women as victims, justifying their behavior by their lack of education:

women are usually less lenient with their slaves than men, but this doubtless proceeds from the ignorant state in which they are brought up; they scarcely receive any education and have not the advantages of obtaining instruction through communication with persons who are unconnected with their own way of life. [...] They are born, bred, and continue surrounded by slaves without receiving any check, with high notions of superiority, without any thought that what they do is wrong.<sup>58</sup>

We cannot know why Maria's mistress mistreated her, but no one would be surprised to learn that her master was having sexual relations with her, that those relations were forced and that the master was the father of her two children. Even if Maria was mentally disturbed, the fact that she brought her master's razor to her room the day before the two murders occurred is a clear indication that her actions were premeditated. Ultimately, Maria's actions constituted a significant financial loss to her master, who was suddenly deprived of three slaves: a boy who would be soon working on the farm; a girl who in a few years would be able to perform domestic service, provide sexual favors and bear more slaves, exactly like her mother and Maria herself, a young woman born into slavery, who probably had provided domestic and sexual services since childhood and was still of reproductive age. Maria was mentally and physically abused by her owners. Moreover, she probably had to face the fact that her son and daughter, who kept her attached to that household, were the product of rape. Like her, they were also condemned to a lifetime of slavery. As a result, murdering her children and making an unsuccessful attempt of committing suicide were desperate and efficient means not only to resist the horrors of bondage and to avenge the violence committed against her, but also to prevent her children from experiencing the same atrocities.

The sources do not reveal what happened to Maria after January 1822. If she arrived in Benguela alive, her life as a *degradada* on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean may have been better than her life as an enslaved woman in Rio Grande do Sul.<sup>59</sup> As Selma Pantoja has pointed out, the usual sites of *degrado* for crimes such as homicide and infanticide were distant regions such as Mossamedes, Malanje, Lubango, Dando and Muxima. But in Maria's case, despite having killed her two children, which resulted in a life sentence of *degrado*, she was not sent to these sites, but rather to

Benguela, which was considered one of the privileged places for penal exile in Africa.<sup>60</sup> Although in the early-nineteenth-century living conditions in West Central African slave ports and penal colonies were very difficult, and detailed information is lacking on the daily lives of black women sent into *degrado* in that period, Maria's life either in prison in Porto Alegre or in Benguela could hardly be worse than the life she had as a slave.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, once in Benguela, Maria would be able to work, be paid and perhaps even be able to form a family.<sup>62</sup>

If Maria's fate is unknown, other documents indicate that her white masters did not long survive. On 8 October 8, 1824, Bittencourt Cidade died and the inventory of the couple's estate indicates that they were both dead by 1825.<sup>63</sup> Their inventory also reveals that the couple owned 28 slaves, but only 5 were women of reproductive age, suggesting that Maria's loss was probably a significant blow to his estate.

Maria was not the only enslaved woman from Rio Grande do Sul to be sent into *degrado* in West Central Africa in the early 1820s. On July 1820, Mônica, a *crioula*, was arrested for the murder of her owner André Dias in a neighboring area of the *capela* (village) of Serrito da Boa Vista, parish of São Francisco de Paula (modern Pelotas).<sup>64</sup> As an important port of southern Brazil, this region was a great producer of *charque* (jerked beef) and had significant slave and freed populations of color. According to Saint-Hilaire, who relied on an 1819 report by a Rio Grande vicar, the town's population was about 5125, of whom about 35% were brown or black slaves, mostly men. Although the vast majority of Rio Grande's free inhabitants were white, the majority of its population were people of color (*mulatos* and natives).<sup>65</sup>

In the *auto de prisão hábito e tonsura*, the *tabelião* established that Mônica was born in Rio de Janeiro, was a field slave of the late André Dias and had no religion. She did not know her age, but the *tabelião* estimated her to be between 28 and 30 years old. She was also described as a woman of short stature, with a round face, thin eyebrows, flat nose, thick lips and black eyes. As Mônica was illiterate, the *tabelião* signed the *auto* for her.<sup>66</sup>

The *ministro* (judge), João Nunes da Silva, then asked her several questions. When asked why she was in prison, Mônica answered that the night of the murder her master had returned from Serrito, where he drank *cachaça*. According to her, he was drunk when he arrived home, and he brought *cachaça* with him, which he gave to her. She then became drunk and passed out; when she woke up she saw her master on the floor, with a wound on his forehead. Under questioning by the judge, Mônica responded that he had hurt himself by falling upon an axe. She continued that when she saw the blood on the axe blade, she went to call a freedman named José dos Orfãos. Despite being black and a former slave, José did not attempt to help Mônica cover up the apparent assault. His position was too tenuous for him to attempt any action that could cost him his freedom. Protecting her would be very risky whether the master lived to bear witness against him or died, in which case they could both be accused and convicted of murder. Thus, José went to call a neighbor and, accompanied by a priest named José Francisco, he returned to Dias's house. There they found Dias dead and accused Mônica of wounding him. When asked who had assumed control of her deceased master's possessions, Mônica explained that her

master was a carpenter, and except for the axe with which he performed his work, he did not have any possessions. She was even unsure who would take her after his death. When asked if that day they had slept with the doors open or if anybody else had entered the house, she answered that as it was still daylight when they fell asleep, the doors were left open and that when she awoke she did not see any signs that any person had entered the house. Finally, when asked whether her master was prone to get drunk, she answered in the affirmative, and added that, especially when he went to the Serrito and stayed there, he drank a lot and typically beat her.<sup>67</sup>

Thirty witnesses testified during the criminal investigation. All except José dos Orfãos were white males identified as either farmers or businessman. José, described as a *preto da costa* and ‘farmer, who makes a living plowing’, provided a short account of how he arrived at Dias’s house and saw him wounded with the bloody axe nearby.<sup>68</sup> He added that he asked Mônica why she had attacked her master, and she replied that she had done so because Dias had told her she would be lashed the next day. The second witness reported that one day, he could not recall the month, the *preto forro* José dos Orfãos came to his home bringing the bound Mônica. He told him that she had killed her master and asked him to serve as a witness and secure her in his house. When he asked her why she had killed her master, she replied that it was ‘temptation’, and that she had given him five blows with an axe. In addition, he said that Serrito’s priest had viewed the body and said that pieces of Dias’s brain were splattered on his chest, and that other people had also seen the wounds, but he did not have the courage to view them himself. The third witness was a farmer who accompanied the priest at the house of André Dias, where he saw the wounded man dying.<sup>69</sup> None of the other witnesses had much to add, as they all arrived at the crime scene or had contact with the defendant only after the murder.

When the criminal investigation was concluded, the *auto de devassa* was sent to the Junta de Justiça in Porto Alegre, where the trial took place, and Mônica was also transferred to the prison there. The lawyer, José Peixoto de Miranda, appointed to defend Mônica, essentially argued that she never confessed to the crime, and none of the witnesses could confirm that she murdered her master. On 17 September 1822, the sentence was pronounced. The Junta de Justiça recognized that Mônica was drunk, so she was not sentenced to death, but to 500 lashes, a fine of 50,000 *réis* and ten years of penal exile in Benguela.<sup>70</sup> In Mônica’s case, she received 50 lashes per day, applied between 20 September and 3 October 1822.<sup>71</sup> By that time, Brazil had proclaimed its independence from Portugal by Dom Pedro I. Very probably, by the time she arrived in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil was no longer a Portuguese colony, but a newly independent country. However, as Joseph C. Miller noted, in the months following the independence of Brazil, it was unclear ‘whether Luanda and Benguela would remain Portuguese, as they had always been governed, or would shift their political allegiance to the Brazilians.’<sup>72</sup> As a result, it is unlikely that the change in Brazil’s status altered the fate of this Brazilian-born enslaved woman.

Mônica’s case illustrates the horrible realities of slavery in the south of Brazil. In a society where slavery was a crucial institution, even the poorest families and individuals owned slaves.<sup>73</sup> The property of a very modest carpenter who probably did not

own any other slaves, Mônica lived in poverty with a man whose only activity besides work in a remote rural area was drinking *cachaça* on the weekends. Despite being poor, André Dias had evidently accumulated sufficient earnings to buy an enslaved woman with whom he shared his daily life and domestic space, drinking and abusing her on a regular basis. Mônica's crime was almost certainly not premeditated, but under the influence of alcohol, she instinctively decided that she was not going to be whipped one more time. For an unmarried enslaved woman living in an isolated region of the deep south of Brazil, killing her master was probably the only viable means of escaping the hardships of slavery. Her sentence suggests that the judge recognized that Mônica was physically abused and was too drunk to form the intention to kill. Had her master been a prosperous *charqueador* instead of a poor carpenter, it would probably have been harder to escape capital punishment.

### Conclusion

Despite the gaps in the criminal proceedings that leave several questions unanswered, the analysis of the cases of Maria and Mônica shows that these two enslaved women decided to resist the daily physical and psychological abuses to which they were subjected by responding extremely violently. Their responses were similar to the reactions identified in other South American slave societies such as Barbacoas, examined by Marcela Echeverri, in which violence was an intrinsic component.<sup>74</sup> The two cases also suggest that the possibilities of negotiation with the masters and mistresses were exhausted. Certainly, the crimes committed by Maria and Mônica were not isolated, and similar strategies continued to be used by enslaved women in Rio Grande do Sul until the abolition of slavery. Challenging the common assumption that enslaved women who worked in the domestic environment were less vulnerable to physical abuse, these two cases show that in both prosperous and poor households, female domestic slaves experienced various forms of daily violence. The analysis of the two cases also illuminates how early in Rio Grande do Sul's history public defenders started condemning physical violence by slave owners against enslaved women, and how the judicial system recognized the legitimacy of their arguments by sentencing the women to death rather than exile. At the same time, in a local slave system that generated so much violence and in which enslaved women were a smaller portion of the population than in other areas of Brazil, recognizing mistreatment was an efficient way to keep slavery alive and avoid more widespread acts of violent and collective resistance. Even though exiling these two enslaved women was intended to deter other enslaved from following their example, this was never an effective solution, as records show that in Rio Grande do Sul enslaved women continued to commit suicide and kill their masters, their own children and their masters' children until the abolition of slavery in 1888. Perhaps for Maria and Mônica, two unmarried enslaved women who were constant victims of all sorts of abuse, and who very probably did not have any relatives, being exiled to Benguela was perhaps a blessing in disguise.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Notes

- [1] Among the few existing book-length studies is Maria Odila Leite da Silva, *Quotidiano e poder em São Paulo no século XIX: Ana Gertrudes de Jesus* (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1984), translated into English as *Power and Everyday Life: The Lives of Working Women in Nineteenth-Century Brazil* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995); Sandra Lauderdale Graham, *House and Street: The Domestic World of Servants and Masters in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992); and Keila Grinberg, *Liberata: A lei da ambigüidade. As ações de liberdade da Corte de Apelação do Rio de Janeiro no século XIX* (Rio de Janeiro: Centro Edelstein de Pesquisas Sociais, 2008 [1994]).
- [2] See Sandra Lauderdale Graham, *Caetana Says No: Women’s Stories from a Brazilian Slave Society* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006) and Junia Furtado, *Chica da Silva: A Brazilian Slave of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
- [3] In Brazil, Sonia Maria Giacomini was pioneer in addressing female slave resistance by violent means. However, her tiny book *Mulher e Escrava: Uma introdução histórica ao estudo da mulher negra no Brasil* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1988) is a survey that explores very few primary sources. Other studies include Maria Lucia de Barros Mott, *Submissão e Resistência: a mulher na luta contra a escravidão* (São Paulo: Contexto, 1988); Jane-Marie Collins, ‘Slavery, Subversion, and Subalternity: Gender and Violent Resistance in Nineteenth-Century Bahia’, in *Brazilian Feminisms: Monographs in the Humanities*, eds. Solange Ribeiro de Oliveira and Judith Still (Nottingham: University of Nottingham, 1999), 34–56; and Jane-Marie Collins, ‘Bearing the Burden of Bastardy: Infanticide, Child Murder, Race and Motherhood in Brazilian Slave Society’, in *Killing Infants: Studies in the Worldwide Practice of Infanticide*, eds. Brigitte Bechtold and Donna Cooper Graves (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 2006), 199–229.
- [4] *Cachaça* is a liquor made of fermented sugarcane juice.
- [5] See Alexandra K. Brown, ‘“A Black Mark on Our Legislation”: Slavery, Punishment, and the Politics of Death in Nineteenth-Century Brazil’, *Luso-Brazilian Review* 37, no. 2, Special Issue: State, Society, and Political Culture in Nineteenth-Century Brazil (Winter 2000): 101. Brown emphasizes that unlike in the USA, Brazilian courts imposed death penalty very sparsely. It was only after the Malé rebellion of 1835 that capital sentences increased.
- [6] Among the classic works on slavery in Rio Grande do Sul, following a Marxist interpretation, are: Fernando Henrique Cardoso, *Capitalismo e escravidão no Brasil meridional* (São Paulo: Difusão Européia do Livro, 1962); Mário Maestri Filho, *O escravo no Rio Grande do Sul: a charqueada e a gênese do escravismo gaúcho* (Porto Alegre: Escola Superior de Teologia São Lourenço de Brindes, 1984); and Décio Freitas, *O capitalismo pastoril* (Porto Alegre, RS: Escola Superior

- de Teologia São Lourenço de Brindes, 1981). Among the recent works exploring archival sources and focusing on resistance against slavery and how enslaved and freed populations strove for better living conditions, are Solimar Oliveira de Lima, *Triste Pampa: Resistência e punição de escravos em fontes judiciárias no RS, 1818–1833* (Porto Alegre: Editora da Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, 1997); Gabriel Aladrén, *Liberdades negras nas paragens do sul: Alforria e inserção social de libertos em Porto Alegre, 1800–1835* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora da Fundação Getúlio Vargas, 2009); Keila Grinberg, 'Slavery, Frontier, and the Law in South America's South, Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina, 19th Century' (paper presented in the conference American Counterpoint: New Approaches to Slavery and Abolition in Brazil, Yale University, October 29–30, 2010); and Karl Monsma and Valéria Fernandes, 'Fragile Liberty: The Enslavement of Free People in the Brazil-Uruguay Borderlands, 1846–1866', *Luso-Brazilian Review* 50, no. 1, Special Issue: Brazilian Slavery and Its Legacies, ed. Ana Lucia Araujo (2013): 7–25.
- [7] See Aladrén, *Liberdades negras nas paragens do sul*.
- [8] The first edition of Saint-Hilaire's travel account in Rio Grande do Sul is Auguste Saint-Hilaire, *Voyage à Rio Grande do Sul (Brésil)* (Orléans: H. Herluison, 1887). The quotes used in this article come from the Portuguese version: Auguste Saint-Hilaire, *Viagem ao Rio Grande do Sul* (1820–1821) (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1939), 78. On Porto Alegre's population see also, Bruno Cesar Euphrasio de Mello, 'A cidade de Porto Alegre entre 1820 e 1890: As transformações físicas da capital a partir das impressões dos viajantes estrangeiros', (MA thesis, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, 2010), 64. For the population of Rio de Janeiro in 1821, see Mary C. Karasch, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro, 1808–1850* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 62.
- [9] All translations from Portuguese and French into English are mine, except otherwise indicated. Saint-Hilaire, *Viagem ao Rio Grande do Sul*, 51.
- [10] Saint-Hilaire, *Viagem ao Rio Grande do Sul*, 74.
- [11] *Ibid*, 79.
- [12] *Ibid*, 87.
- [13] The production of *charque* (jerked beef) was intended for internal consumption, especially the Brazilian enslaved population. See Herbert S. Klein and Francisco Vidal Luna, *Slavery in Brazil* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 63.
- [14] Saint-Hilaire, *Viagem ao Rio Grande do Sul*, 138.
- [15] *Ibid* (1820–1821), 138.
- [16] *Ibid*, 138.
- [17] Nicolau Dreys, *Notícia descritiva da província do Rio Grande de São Pedro do Sul: contendo, alem de topographia physica e politica e de um ensaio de estatistica local, informções sobre e estado actual da população, suas subdiviões e sobre a caracter e costumes dos habitantes* (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia imp. e const. J. Villeneuve e comp., 1839). The version cited here is Nicolau Dreys, *Notícia descritiva da província do Rio Grande de São Pedro do Sul* (Porto Alegre: Editora da Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, 1990), 128.
- [18] See Cardoso, *Capitalismo e escravidão*, 54–66; Jacob Gorender, *A escravidão reabilitada* (São Paulo, Ática, 1990), 422; Maestri Filho, *O escravo no Rio Grande do Sul*; and Freitas, *O capitalismo pastoril*.
- [19] The *tronco* (trunk) is a wood stem with holes for the neck and wrists. See André João Antonil, *Cultura e opulência do Brasil por suas drogas e minas* (São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 2007 [1711]), 91.
- [20] Mieko Nishida, *Slavery and Identity: Ethnicity, Gender and Race in Salvador, Brazil, 1808–1888* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 19.
- [21] Charles Expilly, *Le Brésil tel qu'il est* (Paris: Arnauld de Vresse, 1863), 204.
- [22] See Graham, *Caetana Says No*, 25.
- [23] Expilly, *Le Brésil tel qu'il est*, 206.

- [24] The case of Rosa Egipcíaca, an African enslaved girl bought when she was six years old, and molested by her master until the age of fourteen, is discussed in Luiz Mott, *Rosa Egipcíaca: uma santa africana no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand do Brasil, 1993) and Luiz Mott, 'Rosa Egipcíaca: De escrava da Costa da Mina a Flor do Rio de Janeiro', in *Rotas atlânticas da diáspora africana: da Baía do Benim ao Rio de Janeiro*, ed. Mariza de Carvalho Soares (Rio de Janeiro: Editora da Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2007), 135–55. Keila Grinberg explored the case of the enslaved girl Liberata examined in Grinberg, *Liberata: A lei da ambigüidade* and Keila Grinberg, 'Manumission, Gender, and the Law in Nineteenth-Century Brazil: Liberata's Legal Suit for Freedom', in *Paths to Freedom: Manumission in the Atlantic World*, eds. Rosemary Brana-Shute and Randy J. Sparks (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009), 219–34. See also the case of Honorata, a young slave girl raped by her master at age of 10, described in Robert Conrad, *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 273–80.
- [25] In 1835, very few women participated in the Malê rebellion in Bahia, considered the largest slave rebellion that occurred in Brazil. In the rebellions that preceded the 1835 insurrection, few women appear in the primary sources. See João José Reis, *Slave Rebellion: The Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 56–8.
- [26] Oliveira de Lima, *Triste Pampa*, 99. See also Maria Helena P.T. Machado, *Crime e escravidão: Trabalho, luta e resistência nas lavouras paulistas, 1830–1888* (São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 2014), 43; 49; 40. Machado showed that between 1830 and 1888, in cities such as Campinas and Taubaté in São Paulo, most murders were committed by Brazilian-born slaves against their masters and overseers.
- [27] See Collins, 'Bearing the Burden of Bastardy', 200. For Bahia, Collins uncovered just one case of a slave woman who was accused of killing her own children, and two cases of slave women who killed their masters' children. In Rio de Janeiro, most slaves committed crimes against other slaves. Moreover, according to Mary Karasch, 'Only few slaves were convicted for the murder of a mistress or her children. Conversely, women slaves were seldom criminals. See Karasch, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro*, 329.
- [28] Arquivo Público do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul (hereafter APERS), Fundo no. 003, Comarca do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, Subfundo Tribunal do Júri, Processo no. 440, 1828.
- [29] APERS, N440, M10, E36, 1854; APERS, N1002 M34 E123, 1861; APERS, N88, E 153H, 1866; APERS, N306, M12, E23, 1873 ; APERS, N1625, M51, E122, 1877; APERS, N297, M9, E158, 1881; APERS, N1405, M45, E95, 1886.
- [30] A brief summary of Maria's criminal proceeding is found in Oliveira de Lima, *Triste Pampa*, 112–3, and Arquivo Público do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul, *Processos crimes: Documentos da escravidão no RS. Escravos como vítima ou réus, recorte temporal de setembro/1763 a maio/1888* (Porto Alegre: Arquivo Público do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul, 2010), 60.
- [31] APERS, N117, M01, E33, 'Autos das segundas perguntas', December 13, 1821, 1v.
- [32] This information is indicated in the genealogical tree of Bittencourt Cidade's family, and was obtained through one of the descendants of captain José Bittencourt Cidade.
- [33] APERS, N874, M26, E31, March 1825.
- [34] APERS, N117, M01, E33, 'Auto de prisão, hábito e tonsura', November 15, 1821, f. 2.
- [35] See Renée Souldre-La France, "'Por el Amor!'" : Child Killing in Colonial Nueva Granada', *Slavery and Abolition* 23, no. 1 (2002): 87–100, and Marcela Echeverri, "'Enraged to the Limit of Despair": Infanticide and Slave Judicial Strategies in Barbacoas, 1788–98', *Slavery and Abolition* 30, no. 3 (2009): 403–26.
- [36] Thirty was the maximum number of witnesses heard during a criminal investigation. See Aladrén, *Liberdades negras nas paragens do sul*, 176.
- [37] APERS, 003, 117, 01, 33, 'Testemunha 1', March 20, 1819, 4v.
- [38] APERS, 003, 117, 01, 33, 'Testemunha 5', March 20, 1819, 6v.
- [39] *Ibid*, f. 7–7v.

- [40] APERS, 003, 117, 01, 33, 'Testemunha 6', March 20, 1819, 7v–f. 8.
- [41] *Ibid.*, f. 8. Both the catalog by the Arquivo Público do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul, *Processos crimes*, 60 and Oliveira de Lima, *Tristes Pampas*, 113, state that Maria stated she was possessed by the devil. However, the proceedings indicate that such version was only provided by one witness, Esia Ursula d'Oliveira.
- [42] APERS, 003, 117, 01, 33, January 7, 1822, f. 9.
- [43] *Ibid.*
- [44] On Antoninus Pius's laws on slavery see Gordon Campbell, *A Compendium of Roman Law, Founded on the Institutes of Justinian Together with Examination Questions Set in the University and Bar Examinations (With Solutions) and Definitions of Leading Terms in the Words of the Principal Authorities* (Clark, NJ: The Lawbook Exchange, 2008), 11.
- [45] APERS, 003, 117, 01, 33, January 7, 1822, f. 9–9v. Here he refers to the Alvará d'El Rei, *Livro X da Supplicação*, Lisboa, 30 de setembro de 1693, 367 v, in José Justino de Andrade e Silva, *Collecção Chronologica da Legislação Portuguesa, 1683–1700* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1859), 328.
- [46] APERS, 003, 117, 01, 33, January 7, 1822, 9v.
- [47] As Richard Graham explained, during the colonial period, and over the nineteenth century, several terms designated the wide range of relations and dependents in Brazilian society, including: *padrinho*, godfather; *afilhado*, godson; *compadre* or *comadre*, ritual co-parent; and *agregado*, a poor agricultural free worker 'to whom a landowner granted the right to raise subsistence crops on some outlying patch of the large estate'. Richard Graham, *Patronage and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Brazil* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 20.
- [48] APERS, 003, 117, 01, 33, January 7, 1822, f. 10–10v.
- [49] For the period of 1818–1833, Oliveira de Lima found only three cases of enslaved mothers who killed their children. Lima, *Triste pampa*, 110.
- [50] APERS, 003, 117, 01, 33, January 7, 1822, 10v–f. 11.
- [51] *Ibid.*, 1822, 13v–14v.
- [52] Oliveira de Lima, *Tristes Pampas*, 164.
- [53] See Mello, 'A cidade de Porto Alegre entre 1820 e 1890', 67, and Oliveira de Lima, *Triste Pampa*, 168.
- [54] Arsène Isabelle, *Voyage à Buenos-Ayres et a Porto Alègre, par la Banda-Oriental, les Missions d'Uruguay et la Province de Rio-Grande-do-Sul (de 1830 a 1834)*, (Havre: Imprimerie de J. Morlent, 1835), 502–3.
- [55] Karasch, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro*, 116n14.
- [56] See APERS, Fundo 063; Comarca de Passo Fundo; Localidade: Passo Fundo; Subfundo: Vara Cível e Crime; Processo no. 2251, 1880.
- [57] Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 351. Mary C. Karasch also observes that 'women often had the reputation for cruelty and brutality'. See Karasch, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro*, 113–5.
- [58] Henry Koster, *Travels in Brazil* (London: Longman, 1816), 388.
- [59] Selma Pantoja and Anabela Cunha provide examples of male exiles sent to Angola who were able to have social mobility. See Selma Pantoja, 'A diáspora feminina: degredadas para Angola no século XIX (1865–1898)', *Análise Social* XXXIV, no. 151–152 (1999): 556–7 and Anabela Cunha, 'Exclusão e mobilidade social entre os degredados dna Angola do século XIX', *Revista Angolana de Sociologia*, no. 5 and 6 (2010): 38. I am grateful to Anabela Cunha for providing me with a copy of her article.
- [60] Pantoja, 'A diáspora feminina', 561.
- [61] Mariana P. Candido explained how 'Portuguese and Brazilian authorities exploited Benguela's reputation as an inhospitable setting', by especially emphasizing its unhealthy climate. See Mariana P. Candido, 'Trans-Atlantic Links: The Benguela-Bahia Connections, 1700–1850', in

- Paths of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Interactions, Identities, and Images*, ed. Ana Lucia Araujo (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2011), 252.
- [62] Historians did not examine the daily life of female penal exiles sent from Brazil to Benguela. There are few studies focusing on female penal exiles sent from Brazil to Angola, and none of them examine cases of *degradados* from Rio Grande do Sul. Roquinaldo Ferreira explored some cases of male exiles sent from Brazil (Bahia and Pernambuco) and Portugal to Angola in the eighteenth century, see Roquinaldo Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Atlantic World: Angola and Brazil During the Era of the Slave Trade* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 189–95. Most studies focus on the second half of the nineteenth century. Among these works are Pantoja, ‘A diáspora feminina, 555–572 and Janaína Amado’, *Mulheres que partem: As condenadas em Portugal ao degredo (1737–1800)*, *Portuguese Studies Review* 15, no. 1–2 (2007) : 281–305.
- [63] APERS, N874, M26, E31, March 1825.
- [64] APERS, 139, 06, 123, October 6, 1820, 13v. The criminal proceedings do not specify the exact day the crime occurred. In the proceedings Canguçu is called a district and not a parish. The first settlement of Rio Grande dates back to 1737, when the fortress Jesus, Maria and José was unveiled. Elevated to the category of town in 1751, Rio Grande was situated about 180 miles south to Porto Alegre and was part of the captaincy of Santa Catarina. In 1760, it became the capital of the new captaincy of Rio Grande de São Pedro do Sul.
- [65] According to Saint-Hilaire, the 5125 individuals were divided as follows: 1195 white men, 1388 white women, 17 native men, 26 native women, 61 free *mulato* men, 98 free *mulata* women, 32 free black men, 38 free black women, 1391 black and *mulato* male slaves, and 379 black and *mulata* women slaves. Although these numbers do not match the total population, they indicate its overall distribution. See Saint-Hilaire, *Viagem ao Rio Grande do Sul (1820–1821)*, 123.
- [66] APERS, ‘Auto de prisão hábito e tonsura’, 139, 06, 123, October 24, 1820, f. 4–4v.
- [67] APERS, ‘Auto de perguntas feitas a escrava abaicho mencionada’, Fundo no. 003, Comarca do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, Subfundo Vara Cível e Crime, Processo no. 139, maço 06, estante 123, September 7, 1820, f. 4, 4v, 5, 5v.
- [68] APERS, 139, 06, 123, October 6, 1820, f. 7–7v.
- [69] *Ibid.*, f. 8v–9.
- [70] *Ibid.*, f. 15.
- [71] See Oliveira de Lima, *Triste Pampa*, 165.
- [72] Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730–1830* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 527; Mariana P. Candido also emphasizes the desire of Benguela’s merchants to join the newly independent Brazil, see Mariana P. Candido, ‘South Atlantic Exchanges: The Role of Brazilian-Born Agents in Benguela, 1650–1850’, *Luso-Brazilian Review* 50, no. 1, Special Issue: Brazilian Slavery and Its Legacies, ed. Ana Lucia Araujo (2013): 53–82.
- [73] Kátia M. de Queirós Mattoso, *Être esclave au Brésil: XVIe–XIXe siècles* (Paris: Harmattan, 1994), 150–1.
- [74] Echeverri, “‘Enraged to the Limit of Despair’”.