Contesting Slave Masculinity in the American South

Contesting Slave Masculinity in the American South demonstrates the significance of internal divisions, comparison, and conflict in shaping gender and status in slave communities of the American South. David Stefan Doddington seeks to move beyond unilateral discussions of slave masculinity, and instead demonstrates how the repressions of slavery were both personal and political. Rather than automatically support one another against an emasculatory white society, Doddington explores how enslaved people negotiated identities in relation to one another, through comparisons between men and different forms of manhood held up for judgment. An examination of the framework in which enslaved people crafted identities demonstrates the fluidity of gender as a social and cultural phenomenon that defied monolithic models of black masculinity, solidarity, and victimization. Focusing on work, authority, honor, sex, leisure, and violence, this book is a full-length treatment of the idea of “masculinity” among slave communities of the Old South.

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