Capitalism has served as an engine of growth, a source of inequality, and a catalyst for conflict in American history. While remaking our material world, capitalism's myriad forms have shaped—and been shaped by—our most fundamental experiences of race, gender, sexuality, nation, and citizenship. This series takes the full measure of the complexity and significance of capitalism, placing it squarely back at the center of the American experience. By drawing insight and inspiration from a range of disciplines and employing novel methods of social and cultural analysis with the traditions of labor and business history, our authors take history "from the bottom up" all the way to the top.

Capital of Capital: Money, Banking, and Power in New York City, by Steven H. Uff and Jessica Lutz
From Head Ships to Whole Foods: The Rise and Fall of Activist Entrepreneurs, by Joshua Clark Davis
Creditworthiness: A History of Credit Surveillance and Financial Identity in America, by Jodi Lerner
attention was centered more and more upon the product.” Lewis Mumford, Technics
and Civilization (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1933), 122.
30. Paul E. Johnson, Sam Patch, the Phannas Jumper (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003),
53–61.
31. Harper’s, April 1856, 694; Scientific American, July 30, 1853, 362.
32. Scientific American, July 23, 1853, 394; August 6, 1853, 370; August 13, 1853; Daily South
Carolinaian, July 27, 1853 and July 30, 1853; Daily Register (Raleigh, N.C.), November 9,
1853.
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May 13, 1854; Scientific American, July 22, 1854, 357 and October 7, 1854, 29; Hirschfeld,
“American on Exhibition.” 115.
34. Putnam’s, March 1857, 336 and July 1857, 125.
35. Benjamin, The Arcades Project, 13; Hirschfeld, “American on Exhibition,” 115; Put-
nam’s, March 1857, 336; New York Crystal Palace Papers, box 2, folder 14 (letter Oc-
tober 7, 1858). “A reward of $3000 is offered for the apprehension of whoever started
the fire. The loss is estimated at half a million dollars, in addition to the value of the
building, which is $635,000 and could be sold for a quarter of that sum.” Harper’s,
November, 1858, 830.

CHAPTER 14
PLANTATION DISPOSSESSIONS
The Global Travel of Agricultural Racial Capitalism
KRIS MANJAPRA

Across the British West Indies and the whole British Empire, the
institutions of slavery was officially abolished in 1833. This is con-
ventionally said to mark the culmination of an age of abolition,
the rise of the liberal era, and the origin point of universal freedom in the
nineteenth century. Abolition would reach the French Empire in 1848, the
United States in 1865, the Dutch Empire in 1866, the Spanish, Portuguese, and
Ottoman empires in the 1870s and 1880s, and Brazil in 1888. But during this age
of abolition, new forms of forced and coerced labor arose on a global scale, and
the plantation as an exploitative, racial, political-ecological complex began to
expand and travel the face of earth. Just when the institution of slavery was said
to die away under liberalism, the plantation complex attained new life. The turn-
ing point of 1833, with the official end of slavery in the British Empire, saw the
rise of new kingdoms of sugar, coffee, cotton, and rubber across the Americas,
Africa, and Asia. It saw the spread of plantation rhythms ruled by the lash and
worked by the chain gang. Similarly, as Sven Beckert’s work discusses, the offi-
cial end of slavery on the cotton plantations of the American South after 1865 led
to an expansion of plantation production across the postbellum South, and an
explosion of coercive cotton production across Brazil, Western Africa, Egypt, Cen-
tral Asia, and India in following decades. The word “abolition” suppresses an end.
But the plantation complex, and the modes of racial labor command endemic to
it, actually flourished in abolition’s aftermath.
The first doubts about the actual meaning and implications of abolition
were sown on its very arrival. For example, in June 1839 on the Vreed-en-Hoop
plantation in British Guyana, the following events took place. Rose, an est-
while black slave now turned "apprentice," was deposed by an official about
reports of labor abuse. She testified:

I recollect some Coolies running away and going to Berbice long time ago; it
was two or three months after they came, I heard they went to Berbice. We
were five before they went away... Adonis and Ramsing came back... I saw them
when they were brought to the estate, but I did not see who brought them; they
were carried to the sick-house. Next day they flogged all those that ran away;
they brought all from the sick-house together, and took them to the negro yard
to be flogged. I saw them flogged. Mr. Jacobs was the only white man present;
the driver for them flogged them; they were flogged one after the other; they
got more than three licks, but I cannot say how many, and cannot say that
they got five; their backs were not cut, but in bumps. They appeared to me as
severely punished as my mates were during the apprenticeship when flogged;
they were flogged with a cut [at-] tine tail, the same as we were formerly in use;
some cried and some did not cry; there was no blood. When the blacks have
been flogged I have seen blood on their backs.2

The testimonial speaks of the attempted escape of Indian "coolies," or indent-
tured servants, from the plantation, after the black slaves had been supposedly
feoffed. The audience is a fact-finding committee convened in 1838 to determine
whether practices of slavery were continuing even after abolition. Note that a
black and an Indian overseer were sent out to capture the absconders, and that
in Rose's comparative analysis, the absconding coolies were treated just like
undisciplined slaves: whipped in the same negro yards, kept in the same sick-
house or plantation prison, flogged with the same whip. The only difference
was in the amount of blood on their backs.

The outcome of the investigation into the punishment and torture on
Vreden-Hoop plantation was the following: "The general manager of the estate,
the manager of the Coolies, and the medical officer were all indicted and con-
victed of brutal assaults, before the Inferior Criminal Court of British Guiana, and
either fined or imprisoned." The result for the plantation owner, John Gladstone,
who lived in Liverpool, is a study in contrast. He went on to become one of the
most important political powerbrokers of the British Empire in the 1850s and
1840s, fashioning policies for the British West Indies and the East Indies alike as
a champion of imperial monopoly and protectionism. His business interests in the
East India trade, and in the trade in indentured persons from India, continued to
thrive. And soon his son, William Gladstone, became British prime minister.3

For the four years following 1833, a halfway house institution for the ex-
slaves was erected—this is the so-called "apprenticeship." During the appren-
ticeship period, enslaved blacks across the British Caribbean were placed in a
new legal category: half property, half person. They were made into debt pe-
ons, paying off half of the price of their manumission through their work. The
other half would be borne by the British state, which authorized a mind-
boiling compensation package for the slave owners of the Caribbean in 1833.
Darned as property, and damned as persons—the so-called apprentices were
made to compensate their enslavers for the slave-owners' loss, instead of the
other way around.

At the very same time, another institution was inaugurated, called the inden-
tured laborer system. It, too, produced workers that were half property, half
person. Often through kidnapping and trickery, and the use of brute force, new
laborers were brought from distant lands, especially from Asia and Africa, to
the plantations of the Caribbean after abolition. These workers were contract
laborers, or sometimes debt peons, working under the dread of torture.

The plantation complex, an early form of prison factory, was perfected as a
social and economic institution in the Caribbean. It entailed a racial system
of land appropriation from indigenous peoples, and savage techniques of labor
control of kidnapped and shackled labor migrants. It was based on the enclo-
sure of lands for the intense cultivation of single crops (monocropping) that
were sent into the international market. The plantation complex involved the
outlay of huge amounts of credit, which served as a lever for vast infrastruc-
ture projects of agro-ecological transformation, including land enclosures, ir-
rigation works, railways, and the dredging of ports. In short, the plantation
complex was honed and streamlined in the Caribbean from the 1500s to the
1700s. It mixed together ecological extraction, racism, colonialism, financial
and mercantile capitalism, militarism, and agricultural science into a destruc-
tive, cellular form that metastasized from the Caribbean across the Global
South after abolition, creating what Shu-met Shih has termed a global "planta-
tion arc."4

Racial Capitalism and the Spread of the Plantation Complex

The history of plantations in the Caribbean is inextricably linked to the de-
velopment of North American capitalism. The futures of the antebellum American
South had long been tied up with the Caribbean Sea. We might even think of the
American South as one precinct within a larger circum-Caribbean region of
plantation colonialism. The islands in the Caribbean Sea and the land around
that sea, including the plantation economies of the American South, formed
an interconnected system of circulating peoples, goods, cultures, and techniques
in the rise of racial slavery and the brutalizing triangular trade in kidnapped
Africans. Historical connections between the Caribbean and North American
capitalism extended all the way up the eastern seaboard. Plantation economies of sugar, tobacco, and, eventually, cotton fanned across colonial Virginia, the Carolinas, Barbados, and Jamaica as part of the same seventeenth-century colonial expansion. In addition, extensive webs of banking, shipping, insurance, manufacturing, and trade connected the Caribbean plantation colonies to investors in the financial, milling, and transshipment hubs of Boston, Salem, Providence, New York, and Philadelphia. Finally, the rise of the “cotton kingdom” in the American South from the late eighteenth century onward depended directly on Caribbean mobilities in the wake of revolution and abolition. Louisiana, for example, became a major destination for planter-refugees fleeing the Haitian Revolution. And William Faulkner’s character, Thomas Sutpen, in *Absalom, Absalom*, reminds us of the ongoing circulations of slave owners between Caribbean islands and Southern states both before and after the Civil War. In the mid-nineteenth century, American slavers believed their “cotton kingdom” would colonize Haiti, Cuba, Jamaica, and eventually expand into Brazil. In the age of abolition, the Caribbean Sea served as a reservoir of fugitive capital, enslaved labor, coercive production techniques, racial norms, and slave owner fantasies about perpetuating the abuse of enslaved black flesh.

Racial slavery and plantation labor were key characteristics of the circum-Caribbean economy, including in the American South. And studying these racial labor relations is central to understanding the history of capitalism. We might define “capital” as value-in-motion, or the power that creates new value by putting things in acceleration motion. With roots in the late 1400s, successive phases of capitalism have constructed the colonial relations, the market, the logistical routes, the tastes, and the cultural norms for moving and recombining productive units across globe-straddling distances in the pursuit of new value and new margins of profit. Capitalism is an ever-widening gyre for commodifying, mobilizing, recombining, redistributing, and transforming value on a global scale.

Labor power, or the biochemical and biomechanical energy concentrated in human mental and physical work, serves as an essential fuel for capitalism’s perpetual motion. Capitalism could not have emerged without the ongoing short- and long-distance mobilities, reassignments, retrappings, and transformations of human beings into new kinds of workers—units of commodified labor power. We understand something fundamental about how capitalism works when we consider what it does to working people—how it fetches them, commands them, moves them, and socially reconfigures them. And racial thinking is essential to capitalism’s labor assignments and recombinations.

Following in the black Marxist tradition, eminent scholars have argued that the global abolitions and emancipations of racial slavery in the nineteenth century marked endings that were far from over. For example, W. E. B. Du Bois, in *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935), exposes the sources of Recon-
Table 14.1 The Global Travel of the Plantation Complex

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W. E. B. Du Bois conjures as the "dark and vast sea of human labor in China and India, the South Seas and all Africa; in the West Indies and Central America and in the United States." The 1830s were a cusp decade for this expansion, after which an emergent global racial agrarian regime emerged.

1640s-1713

The propagation of agricultural capitalism around the world occurred through discrete steps and began with the commercial cultivation of sugar. At the end of the sixteenth century, there were already 20,000 African slaves in Brazil. By 1640, a new phase began, as small-hold British and French settler farms in Barbados were gradually incorporated into large-scale plantations. Brazil remained the world's largest producer and exporter of sugar until the 1860s. Dutch, British, Spanish, Danish, Prussian, and Portuguese colonial powers participated in the first plantation revolution from the 1640s to the 1780s, as the circum-Caribbean region, including the North American southeastern seaboard, was transformed into commercial pastoral gardens for the production of sugar, cotton, indigo, and rice. By the latter seventeenth century, the great potential for profits led to extensive warfare between the French and British, with major wars in 1666-1667, 1689-1697, and 1702-1713. This was a period of pillaging and widespread destruction of Caribbean plantations.

1713-1791

A new period opened up after the signing of the Peace of Utrecht in 1713 between the British and the French, lasting until the Haitian Revolution in 1791. The prolonged détente between British and French colonial powers in the Caribbean allowed for the stabilization of mercantilist trade. The British slave colony of Jamaica and the French slave colony of Saint-Domingue emerged as the two great centers for European sugar production and the anchors of the British and French Caribbean economies. These two slave islands were the prized pearls in the imperial necklace. As Philip Curtin points out, the new version of the plantation complex that grew up in the eighteenth century "was more specialized, more dependent on networks of maritime trade, and on intercontinental communication." C. L. R. James showed that the Saint-Domingue economy comprised two-thirds of France's overseas trade by 1789 and was the greatest single market for the European slave trade. During this same period, the Spanish, who had run ingenios, or sugar plantations, in Cuba since the 1500s, began to implement the British and French plantation model. But Saint-Domingue and Jamaica were not considered imperial pearls just because of the level of their sugar production and their ravenous hunger for slaves from Africa, but also because of the purportedly scientific agricultural methods that characterized their enterprises. By the 1780s, Jamaica, St. Vincent, and Saint-Domingue had three of the largest botanical gardens on earth in the
service of agricultural capitalism, and were exchanging and propagating lucrative specimens, such as cochineal for precious red dye and cinchona for fever medication. Even as late as the 1840s, when Jamaica and Saint-Domingue had become the iconic islands of French and British Caribbean failure, these overgrown plantation gardens were still regarded as repositories of the "West Indian method" of commercial agriculture. This "method" entailed large-scale enclosures specializing in production and export of primary commodities (such as loaves of muscovado sugar or bales of raw cotton), absentee ownership and the transfer of profits to imperial metropoles, monopolization of logistics services by metropolitan carriers, limited mechanization, chain-gang labor throughout the year, and the punishment and exhaustion of slaves, or bonded laborers.23

1791–1838

The subsequent decades of revolutionary instability and abolitionism, 1791–1838, witnessed the first expansion of the plantation complex to the circumferential rim of the Caribbean Sea and to the Indian Ocean. King sugar came to rule Cuba and Brazil. Levels of sugar production in both locations now exploded, surpassing the Jamaican yield after 1805.24 Both sugar economies continued to boom under slavery well into the 1870s.25 Following American Independence, and with the beginning of western expansion, the "cotton kingdom" arose across

the American South, stretching from the old circum-Caribbean plantation centers of the Virginias, the Carolinas, and Louisiana to new frontiers across the Mississippi and the Southwest.26

This period, 1791–1838, was the overture to an epochal change: the emergence of a global racial agrarian regime that would soon spread across the Global South. In this period, plantation crops were coming to Asia: sugar to Mauritius, Indigo to Bengal and Java, tea to Assam, coffee to Kerala. Here, for the first time, the capitalist plantation system based on monocropping and year-long production schedules tuned to global markets expanded outside the circum-Caribbean region and the American South. The islands of the Caribbean Sea, the American South, and Brazil became sources of seeds, capital, and knowledge for new plantation enterprises around the world over the course of the coming century. New Orleans cotton seeds were sent to India, Trinidad chocolate seeds to Africa, and Brazil rubber plants to Malaya.27 In the same time, Mississippi plantation overseers were recruited by the East India Company to institute slave-like labor control on Indian plantations in Assam and around Bombay. Meanwhile, Cuban horticultural manuals were being studied by sugar entrepreneurs in the Dutch East Indies.28

The choreography of this expansion must be understood in terms of British imperial statecraft in the early nineteenth century, as its naval forces forcibly established a globe-straddling "imperial meridian" uncontested by any other power on earth.29 The war with, and eventual defeat of, the Napoleonic forces allowed the British superpower to capture Java (temporarily taken from the Dutch in 1811) and Malacca, the Cape Colony (1814), Trinidad and Guyana (1830), and Ceylon and Mauritius (1815). Plantations were set up after what was alternatively called the "West Indian model" or the "American model" in all these territories by the 1820s, often under the supervision of refugee West Indian planters hungry for new land and slaves. In Mauritius, French planters who had escaped from Saint-Domingue after the revolution now brought enslaved African people to work their plantations, literally seeking to replicate the Caribbean system on new terrain. A similar history of the Saint-Domingue planter refugees played out in the well-known case of Louisiana.30

Imperial statecraft enabled French and British planters and their enterprises to relocate. Take the case of the reparations made to West Indian slave owners by the British government at the time of abolition. Twenty million pounds were paid to West Indian planters from the public purse beginning in 1833 to compensate them for the loss of their property in slaves.31 This vast sum of money, obtained from British public coffers as indemnity against what the racial colonial state recognized as the loss of the planters' slave chattel, came to be reinvested in other quadrants of the empire. Reinvestments ranged from railway networks in Scotland and the United States to shipping lines in the Caribbean and banking houses in London.32 But slave capital was not only transferred across the Americas and

14.2 Major Sites of Capitalist Plantations, 1790s–1830s. Dots represent approximate regions of plantation production.
the Atlantic. In fact, a significant portion of slave owner compensations made what Nicholas Draper termed a "swing to the east." The actuarial pricing of black slave life was converted into money and sent to the East Indies.25 West Indian planters got their second life in the East, and in a very material sense, the plantation complex mutated and traveled to the East with them.

For example, Leonard Wray was born in Jamaica and he owned a plantation there before departing for Bengal, India in the 1840s, where he started sugar plantations in Gorakhpur. By the late 1840s, he had moved to Malaya, establishing coffee plantations, and came to be known as "the father of Malayan coffee."26 Robert Boyd Tytler traveled to Jamaica at age fifteen to work on plantations before journeying on to Ceylon to start his own coffee enterprises. Tytler became one of the island's biggest estate owners and a member of the legislative council. Two of his sons and his son-in-law continued as plantation entrepreneurs and political potentates. They were part of an interconnected oligarchy of Scottish families at the helm of the nineteenth-century Ceylonese colonial economy. In fact, it was estimated that by the 1880s 95 percent of the overseers on Ceylonese coffee plantations were Scottish.27

So far, I have traced ninety-seven instances of slave compensation capital making the "swing to the east," transferred from the Caribbean to Asia around the cusp of abolition. Sometimes, this occurred through the diaspora of planters or overseers themselves, such as in the cases of Wray and Tytler. But other times, it took place through the relocation or reinvestments of corporate entities, such as "agency houses," or British trading firms that did business in the colonies. The firm of Gladstone, Grant & Co. in British Guyana, for example, was tied to the agency house of Gillanders, Arbuthnot & Co., which became a major owner of tea plantations in Assam, an important investor in the Darjeeling Railway Co., and eventually a component of the multinational Sun Alliance Insurance Company with branches in India.28 Other times, compensation money from the Caribbean was parlayed into other kinds of social and political capital in Asia through the institution of the East India Company. For example, at least twelve of the directors of the East India Company from the 1800s to the 1840s received compensation for the loss of Caribbean slaves. The transfer of compensation capital from the Caribbean Sea to East India could easily take the form of new kinds of investments, as "dispossessed" absentee landlords from the Caribbean moved their capital into shipping, railways, human trafficking networks of indentured labor, and other kinds of logistic and commercial infrastructure in the East.

Caribbean planters funneled a significant portion of the slave compensation paid out to them to Asia, and the forms of their reinvestments were diverse: the purchase and enclosure of lands, the development of commercial infrastructure, the consolidation of political and administrative power, the rise of small financial and credit institutions, the creation of networks to facilitate the mobility of cheap labor. All of these diversified forms of reinvestment, however, contributed to the implantation of a mutated plantation complex across the British East Indies in the decades after abolition.

Footloose plantation entrepreneurs from the Caribbean, now fattened by the Crown's massive compensation, did not only take money and influence with them to the East, they also took the West Indian method. We observe the transfer of horticultural and botanical methods—evidenced by the circulation of "master manuals" from the Caribbean across the new plantation frontiers of Asia by the mid-nineteenth century, such as Monnereau's Complete Indigo-Maker (first published in Saint-Domingue in the 1730s), Laborie's Coffee Planter (also from Saint-Domingue, and written in Jamaica, 1798), or Alvaro Eyre's guide on sugar production (Ensayo sobre el cultivo de la caña de azúcar, from Cuba, 1862). These texts became required reading among the planters in Asia.

The decay, and eventual death, of the planter dominion in Haiti and Jamaica led to attempted transplantation of modular forms of the plantation complex to other parts of the earth. While the transfer of liquidity was one material way in which this endeavor in transplantation took place, the reproduction and dissemination of authoritative texts about the famed West Indian method was another.

The plantations of the French and British Caribbean of the 1780s, and the American South and Spanish Caribbean by the 1830s, were considered the most mature, and most developed slave economies. They apparently held lessons that aspiring European planters in Asia were desperate to learn. But as J. E. Irwin masterfully points out, the majority of the actual innovations of West Indian or American slave horticulture and agribusiness was contributed by the conceptual and practical innovation of the slaves themselves.29 Whether one thinks of the Rillieux vacuum pan method for sugar production or the engineering of plantation mills and machines, the expertise of enslaved peoples was the source. The conviction that West Indian planters where the ones with the methods shows a deeply skewed grasp on reality promulgated by racial capitalism.30

As mentioned earlier, Elias Monnereau's The Complete Indigo-Maker discussed indigo production in Saint-Domingue. As Prakash Kumar's study ably shows, Monnereau, who had been an indigo planter, published a work that became a staple read for aficionados of indigo cultivation in Bengal. For example, John Prissep, the first major British planter of indigo in Bengal, was one of Monnereau's fervent readers.31

After sections devoted to the horticultural cultivation of indigo, Monnereau turns to questions of labor control. He instructs his readers that "every negro who leaves his master's house should be furnished with a billet . . . and his business should also be specified with the date of the day, and the time he may
enterprising and industrious Chinese are the best emigrants under heaven.\textsuperscript{64} The Chinese, Wray writes, were "like the negroes," in that they too could "withstand the effect of the West India climate." He even imagines the replacement of the African population of the Caribbean with a laboring Chinese population. The Caribbean isles of the future, for Wray, would be peopled by the "enterprising, cheerful," and prudent Chinese. Wray envisioned the shipment of 300,000 Chinese indentured servants to the Caribbean, doubling the island's population.\textsuperscript{65} For Wray, who was born in Jamaica to a slave-owning family, and who had made his life as a planter in exile in Asia, Chinese indentured labor held out the hope of reconstituting the plantation complex, as well as his own abusive and profitable position within that world of force.

1840s–1870s

The decades from the 1840s to the 1870s were bonanza years for the mutating plantation complex. Between the hegemonic discourse of free trade and the rise of economic liberalism with the passing of the Sugar Duties Act and the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 in the British Empire, a new racial agrarian regime was established. A study of time-series data shows the rise in agricultural commodity prices during this period, attributable to a tremendous growth in demand up until about 1873.\textsuperscript{66} Factory workers in Europe demanded tea and sugar as their morning stimulants, merchants from around the world required jute and henequen to package their goods for overseas shipment, and the middle classes purchased coffees and chocolates in their cafes and salons.\textsuperscript{67} The boom was followed by a conjunctural fall in prices (called the "long depression," 1873–1896), which coincided with the swift multiplication of family farms in the emerging Global North and the spread of huge multinational plantation corporations across the nascent Global South.\textsuperscript{68}

Wielding the power of military might, European imperial governments under the aegis of the British superpower sanctioned European colonists to take over the lands of colonized "natives," to cut down "wastelands" inhabited by indigenous communities, and to convert existing agricultural tenures into cash cropping. The boom years of economic liberalism were thus a peak period of primitive accumulation on a worldwide scale. This point can be concretely traced by considering the extensive writing of land regulation acts across the Indian Ocean. The Bengal Regulation Act (1829), the Malacca Land Regulations Act (1830), the inauguration of the Cultivation system in Java (1830), the Government of India Act (1833), the Annexation of Upper Assam (1839), and the Grant of Darjeeling (1839) all legislated primitive accumulation, or the appropriation of land and labor through acts of war.\textsuperscript{69} In Hawaii, what came to be known as the Great Māhele, or the Great Division of Lands, took place in 1848, as 60 percent of the lands in the Hawaiian archipelago was forcibly acquired by the crown and subsequently largely claimed by American business interests.\textsuperscript{70}

From a broader perspective, the changes to land tenure across the world, whether we think of the Prussian Reform Edict of 1807, the colonial laws of the 1820s and 1830s discussed above, the famous Act X of 1859 in British India that established peasants' rights in land, or the Emancipation of the Serfs in 1861, were all in the service of organizing agricultural production to better serve international capitalist markets. And this mass reorganization of the lands of the earth required law, military, scientists, and engineers—the musketeers of the plantation complex.

William Cronon describes the American mid-century project to soderl the vast expanses of the "Great West" to the emerging commodity hub of Chicago.\textsuperscript{71} Alfred Chandler points to a management revolution that began in 1840s, marked by the transition from personal to impersonal forms of commerce, and the expansion of utilities, reconnaissance, land surveying, and civil engineering services, which sustained the reorganizing of lands on an intercontinental scale.\textsuperscript{72} Across the colonial world, new land regulations benefited European planters, as well as native landlords and big peasants who agreed to plant cash crops.

In the context of the formal abolition of slavery in the British Empire, 1834–1838, a "new system of slavery" emerged, as Hugh Tinkler famously named it.\textsuperscript{73} Not only did the system of indenture replicate the modes of labor control under slavery, but the institutions of capital, land, and labor control that were first hired on Caribbean plantations now took root in other parts of the earth. This circulation has not been properly recognized in the historiography. Vast numbers of dispossessed Indian and Chinese peasants entered contracts for plantation labor overseas, under pressent and force.\textsuperscript{74} But this occurred just as new plantation frontiers opened up across the Indian Ocean and as a new global racial and colonial agrarian regime was in the offing.\textsuperscript{75} Thus, it is not only the transit of Asian bodies across geographic space that deserves our attention—conceived in terms of the study of diaspora—but also the simultaneous and interconnected expansion of the plantation complex, and agricultural racial capitalism, itself. If the study of diaspora gives us insight into the diverse subjective experiences of the plantation economy, the study of the emerging arrangement of power, land tenure, capital investment and labor control illuminates the objective structures of the plantation complex that embroiled peoples from the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Europe in each others' diasporic flows, thereby creating altogether new mobile formations.

These decades after abolition, from the 1830s onward, were also the years in which tea cultivation was forced on Assam and Ceylon, sugar and rubber on Java and Malaya, coconut and oil palm on Fiji and Papua New Guinea, sisal
and coffee on Liberia and the Congo. All of these plantation ventures involved the importation of bonded migrant laborers from neighboring regions, or from across the seas. Chinese indentured laborers, for example, were the first to work on the tea fields in Assam, followed thereafter by displaced tribal communities from the hill tracks of Bihar and the Gorkhas from Nepal. Tamil workers, often from tribal communities or Dalit castes, were brought in large numbers to Ceylon, with 20,000 recorded deaths between 1841 and 1849 alone. The indenture system coordinated distant migrations—Indian workers to Fiji and Mauritius, Chinese laborers to Peru and Queensland (Australia), and intraregional migrations of indigenous peoples and subaltern ethnic groups onto plantation enclosures. So, "tribal" or adiwasi peoples of the Munda, Oraon, Kharia, Kol, and Bilu ethnic groups were brought from Bihar to neighboring Bengal to do the work that Bengali peasants would not do. Similarly, people from northwest Cameroon were brought down from the hills to work in the tea and coffee plantations on the coast. This pattern of mixed long-distance and proximate networks of forced labor supply was repeated across Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The drift from the forests, jungles, and hills did not occur out of choice but in the context of accelerating incursions into and reclamations of "wasteland" by the colonial state.

As the plantation complex traveled, it negotiated local settlement patterns and indigenous systems of rule. In South and Southeast Asia, for example, credit, coercion, and statecraft operated in very different ways than in the plantation economies of the Americas. Debt bondage, as a mode of coerced labor that differed from slavery and indenture, served as the most important technique of labor control. Credit grants and the debt mechanism were used to press vast numbers of Indian peasants and landless laborers into plantation work, or into growing cash crops on small-hold farms, mediated always by caste and the strict segmentation of family lines. In Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Madras, Burma, Java, Ceylon, and Sumatra, peasants faced less the mortal fear of physical punishment and torture in the present, and more the fear of future retribution if debts were not paid back on time. Historians have pointed to the dialectic between plantation cultivation and small-hold farming, as it emerged across much of the rim of the Bay of Bengal in this period. The travel of the plantation complex did not flatten the customary land tenure systems of Asia, but rather it created new relationships between land, labor, capital, and international markets for commodities. The plantation complex oriented the heavily indebted small-hold rice farmers of Burma and Bengal, the tea pluckers in Assam, the Chinese indentured servants in Fiji, and the Afro-Caribbean laborers in Guyana, to what Du Bois called "a common destiny"—the destiny of working within the agrarian economy of global colonial capitalism, and of resisting, contesting, and surviving against its political, economic, social, and epistemological assignments.

During the high tide of liberalism, the forms of dispossession produced on a global scale by the plantation complex engendered a chain of political rebellions and resistance movements across the colonial world. In the aftermath of perhaps the greatest revolution of modern history, the Haitian Revolution of 1791, we observe converging rebellions in colonial plantation economies in distant parts of the world, such as the Virginia Slave Rebellion in 1838, the Jamaican Revolt of 1831–32, the Mahi Revolt in Brazil in 1835, the Parizid Movement (1820–1860), the great sepoys-led uprising in India (1857), the Blue Mutiny in Bengal (1859), the Phalagiri Uprising in Assam (1860), the General Strike by enslaved people across the American South (1865), and the Morant Bay rebellion in Jamaica (1865). These revolutionary movements shared the aim of ending racial, colonial dispossession, and suggest the strange entanglements of distant people and their fugitive, improvised forms of radicalism.

1870s–1930s

The final phase discussed here spans the period from the 1870s to the 1930s. It witnessed the consolidation of the global racial agrarian regime under the sway of great multinational corporations. The multinationalization and financialization of plantations had a major consequence: the birth of what would come to be called the Third World, between latitudes just north of the Tropic of Cancer and latitudes just south of the Tropic of Capricorn. The figure shows the major sites of capitalist plantation production.
The plantation complex became increasingly interwoven in huge operations of monopoly capitalism with the facilitation of colonial governments. Indeed, as George Beckford shows in his classic work, *Persistent Poverty*, plantation-owning corporations became indistinguishable from colonial states by the turn of the twentieth century. For example, Unilever Ltd., in many ways, became the state in the Solomon Islands, just as the United Fruit Company did in Honduras. The sugar giant Tate & Lyle Ltd. merged with the colonial state in Trinidad, just as Booker McConnell did in Guyana and Colonial Refining in Fiji. From the 1870s onward, we note a trend of agglomeration in plantation holdings worldwide. We might say that plantations became “Weberianized” in this period—subject to vast bureaucratization. This bureaucratization of the racial agrarian regime, which involved the emergence of new forms of governmentality, provides a proximate condition for the emergence of the Third World imagination. As Woodville Marshall observes, “A bureaucratically organized system [emerged] in which whole blocks of people [were] treated as units and [were] marched through a set of regimentation under the surveillance of the small supervisory staff.” Even as anticolonial activists were envisioning postcolonial nation-states in the early twentieth century; a cross-cutting Third World imagination was also on the rise—expressed in the writings of W. E. B Du Bois, or José Maritáeguí, or Benoy Kumar Sarkar, or Mao Tse Tung, or Frantz Fanon, or Che Guevara. These gestures toward a political identity that cut across liberal nation-state lines represent the subjective recognition of a momentous objective transformation of geopolitics and global economy.

It is as if what the plantation complex of the mid-nineteenth century had sketched out in watercolor was now being concretized in ink through the spread of “bureaucratic rationality,” and its middle managers, company executives, information gatherers, and record keepers. Here we see the historical shift taking place from the plantation complex to the Third World, which corresponded to a shift between different modes of resistance and conceptions of anticolonial struggle.

The biopolitical bureaucratisation of conventions of calculation and measurement did not diminish the coercive economy that operated on plantations but raised it to a higher genre. Take, for example, the role of big farms in Africa after the Berlin Conference in 1884–85. The establishment of new colonial boundaries on the African subcontinent was a joint affair of colonial states and multinational corporations. Plantations were rapidly established in Sub-Saharan African territories—in Togo, Namibia, in the Congo, Kenya, and Tanzania by the British, the Germans, the French, the Portuguese, and the Belgians. This led to the infamous forced labor system in the Belgian Congo and in German East Africa—where the Belgian and German governments commanded villages to grow cash crops and inflicted mortal punishments (most infamously, the cutting off of hands) when quotas were not met. In the Congo, in the advent of atrocities, Unilever had been granted the right to cultivate 74,000 hectares of land, about the size of New York City, in oil palms between 1911 and 1918. The violence of the colonial state cannot be separated from the drive for “raw material” commodity frontiers. In German East Africa, the German East Africa Company not only owned the plantations but also had a controlling stake in almost every other sector of the colonial economy: local banks, retail agencies, and importantly, mining and timber firms. After multinationalization, primitive accumulation made a scalar upward shift, as big companies coordinated the extraction-to-exhaustion of wealth from many kinds of bodies—human, animal, botanical, geological. The Móji-Móji War of 1905 was as much a revolt against the totalizing logic of corporate extractivism as it was a revolt against the German colonial state.  

But again, multinationals became effectively indistinguishable in postcolonial states in the political ecologies of the plantation complex. In Guyana, 80 percent of arable land came to be owned by multinationals. In Trinidad, sugar giant Tate & Lyle bought up all competing sugar plantations and became the sole sugar producer in the country by 1937. Similarly, in Assam, Malaya, Java, and Ceylon a massive corporatization of plantations was taking place. Tetley Tea, Lipton’s, Duncan’s, and Brooke Bond emerged as the major corporations controlling thousands of acres of land across different colonies. By the time of the rubber bonanza of the 1890s, it was no longer hapless West Indian planter-refugees who established new agribusinesses, as had been the case in the 1840s. Now, corporate titans such as Goodyear, Firestone, Dunlop, and Michelin were involved in orchestrating the transfer of Brazilian rubber trees to Malaya and Vietnam and in hiring Indian khangans and mahraties (labor recruiters) to vacuum up, through violent means, the necessary number of Tamil and Burmese laborers from the countryside. The result was the expansion of the plantation complex at a mind-boggling rate: British Malaya went from having not a single Hevea rubber plant to producing more than 500,000 tons of rubber per year between 1900 and 1920. If the construction of European territory was emerging through discourses of civil society and the welfare state, the construction of Third World territory emerged through discourses of resistance to compounding primitive accumulation and extractivism. And if postcolonial nation-states found themselves struggling to form stable civil societies once the colonizers formally left, this certainty had to do with the long legacy of extractive governmentality that had structured these political orders—and the fact that in many cases, even as the colonial governments fell, the multinationals remained. By the 1930s, 30 percent of all foreign investment in the world was made in the plantation sector, and that number grew in the 1950s. The implications were especially severe in the context of the extreme price instability for plantation commodities during the first half of the twentieth
century. The severe disruptions of trade networks during World War I caused a spike in prices, followed by a precipitous crash in the early 1920s. This was soon followed by the Crash, as prices tumbled and remained low after the Great Depression. In the context of price instability and international turmoil, multinational firms and governments were making decisions together—the faint line between the two was ever-vanishing. The rise of multinational firms went along with a huge rise in demand for indentured labor. Hugh Tinkler offers the classic comprehensive account of the indenture system, 1830–1922. His argument has a strong teleology, in which the system of indenture is "questioned," then "condemned," and finally "demolished." This obfuscates the fact that the indenture system roared loudest in the years from 1870 to 1920. More Indians entered indenture in the decade from 1901 to 1910 than in the previous two decades combined. And more Chinese entered indenture in that decade than in the period from 1871 to 1900. In other words, the multinationalization of the plantations propelled the system of coerced labor, before its legal demise in 1922. The work of Adam McKeen and Sunil Amrith shows that Asian migrations across the Pacific increased drastically in the wake of World War II, to places such as Malaysia, Ceylon, Fiji, Hawaii, and Northern Australia.

Plaintation Commodities at the Heart of Empire

If European-centered markets came to depend on plantation products from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries, plantations also possessed European societies in unsuspecting ways. Luxury goods, such as refined sugar, flavored tea, coffee, milk chocolate, and liquid soap, became necessities of daily life over the course of the nineteenth century. The blood, sweat, and flesh of laboring and tortured black and brown bodies was crystallized in the form of tea, coffee, soap, and chocolate, ingested and consumed by metropolitan customers. By the late nineteenth century, Europeans used plantation commodities in ways that infiltrated all aspects of the quotidian: sugar for nutrition, cocoa for chocolate candy, fabrics and dyes for clothes, vegetable oils for soap. Without gutta-percha there could have been no telegraph wires; without rubber, no tires or bullets; without jute, no shipping sacks. Plantation inputs provided for the alimentary, clothing, and hygiene needs of the vast crowds of people pouring into European factory towns, as well as for the needs of the industrial machines. As Anne McClintock demonstrates in her study, to be a civilized and modern Victorian by the 1870s meant to consume the processed goods from plantation peripheries, and not just from local hinterlands. Civility was caught up in performances of the tasteful consumption of valuable materials rendered exchangeable across the racial and colonial line of difference. Most desirable were those refined goods purified of their "naked nature."

By the late nineteenth century the extremely intimate relationship between metropolis and periphery brought a global system of abstract exchangeability and led to the ghostly apparition of plantations in imperial centers. British corporations most involved in plantation production began establishing "model villages" in Britain, which aimed to be "total institutions" in ways that oddly evoked the logic of the plantation complex. Cadbury's Bourneville town (and chocolate factory), Rowntree's New Earswick settlement (also a chocolate factory), Unilever's Port Sunlight town (and soap factory), and Ripley Ville for cotton processing, all emerged as alter-forms of the plantation, organizing white laborers to refine and package plantation inputs for the market. Labor was organized in gangs (or shifts), supervised by overseers, and paid according to task-wages. Various forms of unescrowing were also practiced. For example, the scrip system supplied a portion of workers' pay in the form of chips, instead of currency, which were only redeemable at the company store. The scrip system had long been honed on plantations across the Caribbean, Asia, and Latin America in the nineteenth century; seen from the opposite angle, in 1928, when Henry Ford embarked on his project to establish vast rubber plantations in "Fordlandia," on a concession from the Brazilian state of 3,900 square miles of land along the Amazon River (the equivalent of ten New York Cities), he transplanted the architecture, labor control regime, and managers from his Detroit company town to the new frontier. The project ended up a failure. But by the 1930s, plantations and industrial factory enclosures were not only mirrors of each other—as they had been from the very start—but they were now increasingly owned and managed by the same multinational corporations. Even as the earth was being configured into a Global North and a Third World according to the logic of and resistance to racial colonial capitalism, the fetish of exchangeability was making specters of the 'third World show up in the metropolis and specters of the Global North appear in the periphery.

The Dark and Vast Sea

By the 1890s, a world of plantations belied the Global South. Not just laboring bodies but vast ecologies had come under the sway of racial capitalism. The "sugar colonies" in the western hemisphere were matched by the "rubber colonies" in the eastern hemisphere; the iconic tea and coffee plantations of India and Ceylon counterposed the iconic cotton plantations of the American South. The global history of plantations can be understood in terms of the material travel of the plantation complex after the collapse of the British and French slave economies in the 1830s, and as one of the afterlives of slavery.

The history of plantations sheds light on an emerging racial agrarian regime that developed over the course of the nineteenth century. The expansion of racial capitalism through the discourses of liberalism was reliant on the extension of
the plantation complex across every continent on earth. The abstract, exchangeable, sovereign, and accounted financial form of money veiled the "off the books" profits and eased extractions of life-power from colonized and terrorized flesh, blood, and soil. Forced labor and dispossessed life were the conditions of possibility for the discourse of progress and industrial development in the Global North. The resistance to conforming forms of occupation and primitive accumulation, and to the governmentalities of multinational firms, consolidated the discourse of the Third World in the twentieth century.

The high tide of liberalism was also a high-water mark of looting, plundering, extracting, and dispossessing within empire. In this period, primitive accumulation was at peak operation, driven by state-legislated changes to land tenure regimes, by military occupation, and by a conceptual project to think of Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia as exchangeable terrains of resource extraction and waste reclamations. The Caribbean—that region which Jamaica Kincaid called the "Small Place"—actually served as the apertures through which a global process emerged. And this is not just because of its central position in the slave trade but also because of what happened when slavery officially ended.

Alongside the liberal universalisms that developed with the wage, a fragmented, multivocal, global "public of strangers" emerged through the stratifications of the plantation complex. This public of strangers carries the name of the Third World. For us to grasp the meaning of global history, in a way that redistributes our historical consciousness and understanding, we need to find new ways to conceive that Third World undercommons, not so as to impose false uniformity, but so as to glimpse, behind the veil of liberalism, the historical relations of those different groups who comprised the dark and vast sea.

Notes

2. House of Commons, Hill Coolies, British Guiana: Correspondence Relative to the Condition of the Hill Coolies and Other Labourers Introduced into British Guiana (London: 1838).
4. John Gladstone consulted with the 1846–1847 Select Parliamentary Committee on Negro Apprenticeship, and the 1849 Parliamentary Committee on East India Produce. Other compensated slave owners from the Caribbean served on the Select Committee on Transportation (1833), the Select Committee on Sugar and Coffee Planting (1846–48), and the 1867 Committee on Commercial Relations with China. As noted earlier, John Gladstone's son, William, was already a high-ranking member of the Colonial Office in the 1850s, and went on to become the prime minister of Britain.

15. Mints, Sweetness and Power, 43.
17. Carlin, The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex, 175.
18. C. L. R. James, The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolu-
19. Tomich, Through the Prison of Slavery (1974–94), Leila Fernandez Prieto, Islands of Knowl-
20. DeBeaux, "Het Cultuurhistorisch En Zijn Bedroombare Onder-
22. Thomas D. Rogers, The Deepest Wounds: A Labor and Environmental History of Sugar in Northeast Brazil (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 38; Reina-
aldo Fonseca Mouto, From Rainforest to Cane Field in Cuba: An Environmental History since 1492 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2009), 128; B. W. Higman, Plan-
tation Jamaica 1750–1838: Capital and Control in a Colonial Economy (Kingston, Ja-
manica: University of West Indian Press, 1980), 176. Cuba was the largest sugar producer in the world by the 1820s. In the 1820s and 1830s Cuban sugar production represented 13 to 20 percent of world production. Between 1850 and 1870, it was never less than 24 percent. Laird Bergdahl, "The Economic Viability of Sugar Production Based on Slave Labor in Cuba, 1859–1879," Latin American Review 24, no. 1 (1989): 112.

29. Ibid.
30. Nicholas Draper, "Helping to Make Britain Great: The Commercial Legacies of Slave-
ownership in Britain," in Legacies of British Slave Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain, ed. Catherine Hall et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge Uni-
31. Tony Webster, "An Early Global Business in a Colonial Context: The Strategies, Man-
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34. Joseph E. Inikori, Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in Interna-
tional Trade and Development (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
35. Johnson, River of Dark Dreams, 176.
36. Prakash Karmakar, Indige Plantations and Science in Colonial India (Cambridge: Cam-
38. Ibid., 49, 50.
39. Ibid., 60.
43. Ibid.
44. See Jeffrey Williamson, Trade and Poverty: When the Third World Fell Behind (Cam-
bridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2013) for the Smeetsbeck price index for this period provided in Ton Ivo Klokland, "Zooming in on Sugarbeets/ Monthly Wholesales Prices in Brit-