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A.G. HOPKINS
Edited by

GLOBALIZATION
IN WORLD HISTORY

1102445

The Collaboration of Labour: Slaves, Empires, and Globalizations in the Atlantic World, c. 1600-1850

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How we delineate 'globalization' depends on the interpretive use we plan for the category. For journalists and political scientists it is a name for a contemporary order of things. For historians it may merely be a new flag to fly over the old question of the origins of the modern world. Even among them there will be serious disagreements about modernity and the world they seek to explain and, in consequence, about process and periodization. The division of 'globalization' into 'archaic' or 'modern' or 'proto' phases, as a generation ago with 'modernization' and 'industrialization', may generate more questions than answers.

This essay, in part, complements others in this collection, adding to it the Atlantic world in the early modern period. It questions, like them, the teleological construction of the 'global', common to so many contemporary accounts, and argues for the non-cumulative and plural character of world history. No cultural, political, technological or economic regime has ever integrated more than part of the planet, and later systems failed to subsume the worlds created by earlier ones. What distinguishes this essay from its companions, however, is its focus on human labour. It proposes the organization and co-ordination of work in different parts of the planet as the key to 'globalizations' and, if we choose, to 'globalization' understood in its Whiggish singularity. We would do well to heed Adam Smith's advice, rarely understood by most who invoke Smith, that 'It was not by gold or by silver, but by labour, that all the wealth of the world was originally purchased'. While Smith's transcendent theme was the division of labour, we may instead choose to elucidate its collaboration.

This essay explores how an alliance of New World plantation slavery and semi-free Old World labour between 1500 and 1900 generated global circuits of bullion, sugar, cotton, wheat, beef and debt, and cycles of colonial expansion and European political and cultural history of the sugar industry. It explores the expansion and European political and cultural history of the sugar industry, and the role of the plantation in the Atlantic world. It also discusses the role of the plantation in the Atlantic world, and the role of the plantation in the Atlantic world.

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led to its cultivation in India, then Egypt and the Arab Mediterranean, where sucrose, with great difficulty, was extracted from its crystals, products of alchemical expertise, bewitched all who came in contact with them, a pound of sugar going for more than its weight in precious metals in late medieval Europe. Christendom's crusaders learned in Crete, Cyprus and Sicily how it was made: the heavy labour of growing, cutting, hauling, chopping, grinding, and the arts of boiling and curing. Local people were coerced into sugar production, and small amounts were made at mills which would otherwise have ground cereals. But where flight of indigenes, or their deaths, intervened, sugar was valuable enough to justify the purchase of slaves. Captives from eastern Europe and the British isles, and ultimately from the Maghreb and West Africa, once cane was planted in Portugal's Atlantic islands, were imported to cut and mill cane.⁶ In Madeira and São Tomé, investments in labour and machines were so substantial that sugar could not be profitably produced on a small scale. A pattern of linked environmental, social, and economic change thus emerged which would later be imprinted on the islands of the Caribbean: the clearing of large tracts of land on these islands, and with it deforestation and desertification, the coercion and destruction of local populations, the importation of slaves, the whole initiative based on substantial capital and credit flows justified by an economy streamlined to export one valuable product.⁷

It has now, indeed, become conventional to talk of a 'sugar plantation complex', migrating ultimately to sixteenth-century Brazil, and then to Barbados, diffused to the rest of the Caribbean and ultimately the wider world.⁸ The efficiency of this model has recently come under attack: did this 'institution' spring fully formed like Athena from Zeus in the thirteenth century, and how much in this 'complex' are the peculiar stories of seventeenth-century Barbados and eighteenth-century Jamaica being imposed on, and made normative for, an intricate chain of events and interactions?⁹ J.C. Miller urges an approach more sensitive to context and process, and more careful about the particularity of the phenomena which the model attempts to aggregate. This essay is, in part, a response to this challenge, but it is also moved by another concern: to what extent is the prevailing description of an exotic conjuncture of sugar and slaves not complicit with an approach to world history which, paradoxically, balkanizes that history into regional ghettos? Might we not, following Eric Williams and Sidney Mintz, place the sugar plantation complex into our narratives of temperate as well as tropical history? Sugar, in several theatres of human experience, was ultimately a reason for putting the world to work.

The Modernity of the Sugar Plantation

Sugar production superficially resembles wine-making: canes, like grapes,

need be planted, harvested, and pressed before they rot. In tenth century Cyprus and eleventh century Sicily, the canefield was often the successor to the vineyard. But wine and sugar are wholly different in the raw material to final product ratio, and once production was perfected in the regime of the fifteenth and sixteenth century Atlantic colonies, sugar involved heavy machinery, and a chain of processes, which required an entirely different scale of production. The production of sugar came to resemble that of metals: an ore, which needed cultivating, had to be mined and transported to a centre where it was smelted into a form valuable enough to be worth transporting to centres where it would be refined into a final product.

The sugar mill – *engenho* (Portuguese), *ingenio* (Spanish, the word finding itself, untranslated, in the subtitle of Ligon's 1657 *History of Barbados*), literally 'the engine' – was the centre of an agricultural regime which, in its mature form, held several hundred acres and many scores of slaves under its discipline. It was a machine for colonization, in the classic Roman sense: it consumed the indigenes, sucking into its furnaces as much timber as could easily be brought to it, and implanted the foreign in the local environment. Oviedo in the *Historia General y Natural de las Indias* described the massive investment required to make sugar in the Caribbean: as much as fifteen-thousand ducats in order to pay for the building of the mill, its boiling-house, the houses where the sugar is cured, the hundred and twenty negroes needed to keep the machines moving, thousands of head of cattle, and stores of timber and food.¹⁰ Hispaniola's sugar production thus depended on inflows of capital and debt – Oviedo noted, in particular, the investments in *ingenios* of the Welser and the Genoese. All the subsequent re-enactments of the 'sugar revolution', from seventeenth-century Barbados to eighteenth-century Saint Domingue and nineteenth-century Cuba, would depend on similar capital infusions. But it also required the intervention of the state; it was, in F. Ortiz's phrase, 'una especie de capitalismo privilegiado'. Decrees of Charles V in 1518, 1519, 1529 and 1538 encouraged sugar production through facilitating public grants of land to *ingenios*, removing taxes on imported inputs, encouraging the migration of skilled craftsmen from the Canaries, and, most strikingly, protecting slaves and machinery from their owners' creditors in the event of insolvency.¹¹ In the decree of Charles V of 1538, the Crown's protection was extended at the same time to mills smelting metals and manufacturing sugar, with their slaves, instruments, and machinery, 'that they might not cease to prosper for the common good of these kingdoms and of the Indies'.¹² Repayment was to be made in the product of the mills, and indeed over several centuries, the perpetually indebted and failing New World planters, buying overpriced imports from Europe, more than repaid their debts in the form of sugar, molasses and rum, and in the downstream supply-and-demand flows based on these commodities.¹³

We need to recover a clear sense of the modernity of the mature sugar plantation, because Liberals and Marxists alike are prone to treat slave

production under state protection as a medieval relic. There is a misunderstanding: the sugar plantations of Barbados, and later Jamaica and St Domingue, were in fact at the cutting edge of capitalist civilization, whether we look at the size of the labour force attached to single enterprises, its task specialization, its subordination to a time discipline, its alienation from its tools, its wholly expatriate character, the capital and machine intensive nature of sugar production, its extensive economies of scale, and its dependence on long-distance trade for inputs and for exporting its product. African slavery involved the ultimate commodification of labour and it was, moreover, a modern rational, legal condition: it exemplified the apotheosis of both the law of property and the right of government to decide the identity and conditions of all who lived under it.

Yet the complexity of the 'modern' needs also to be emphasized, for the New World, with its coerced labour, is commonly and incorrectly juxtaposed to an Old World in which labour was mainly disciplined by money.¹⁵ Even in Amsterdam or London many unfree labour regimes were spliced to the monetized economy: apprentices in guilds; warriors pressed under naval and military discipline; women, children and dependants, within the family; tenants, sharecroppers, indentured servants, on nearby farms. The plantation slavery of Ligon's Barbados, indeed, may be said to represent an assimilation of an Iberian institution, embodied in the Spanish loan word 'negro', to English agrarian practices of purchasing labour services, via contracts of indenture.¹⁶ In the early stages of all the plantation colonies, moreover, the binding of local labour, in particular the kidnapping and barter for Amerindians, was initially more common than the very expensive business of purchasing African slaves.¹⁷ The 'sugar revolution' in Brazil, and later Barbados and Jamaica, was initially financed by capital organized within the New World, in the form of labour, dyewoods and other timber, and bullion extracted from the region. Most crucially the growth of cities like Amsterdam or London, or Bristol, Nantes, and Bordeaux, was directly connected to that peripheries of unfree labour. New World slaves were not the only tortured collaborators of urban Europe. As Ferdinand Braudel reminded us, simultaneous with the rise of the trading cities of western Europe and the slave plantations of the Atlantic came the 'second serfdom': east of a line which stretched from Hamburg to Venice, peasants who were already emancipated when Columbus reached Guanahani, found themselves re-subordinated, over the course of the sixteenth century, to a fierce discipline which ensured that wheat flowed to Danzig, Riga, Stettin and Wismar, and the luxuries of Hamburg, Amsterdam and Paris, including the products of the East and West Indies, flowed to their masters.¹⁸ Two spheres of apparently 'pre-capitalist' social relations thus arose in connection with the rise of the market economies of western Europe: Polish serfs worked seven days a week, and slaves in Martinique and Jamaica six, in order that Swedes and Prussians might drink sugared coffee in Chinese porcelain, and gentlemen in Hamburg, Bordeaux

and London might add credit to their ledgers. It is a pity that Europe's historians tend, like their ancestors, to create separate accounts of profit and loss for each mode of global economic systems.

Slaves and the City

We might describe the slave and serf peripheries of early modern capitalism as examples of the displaced despotism of the market. James Scott has described how planned cities like Washington and Brasília are always flanked by chaotic suburbs and slums which make possible the ordered regime at the centre.¹⁹ Had he extended his gaze to the rational and civilized Western centres of the world economy, where labour, weights and measures, security of person and social welfare are regulated, he would have found them always surrounded by overseas zones of plunder, coerced labour and limited rights. For trading cities like Amsterdam and London, often fair and pleasant places for those who lived near them, prospered on the right to exchange commodities which were very rarely the product of their vendors' efforts, on work disciplined by direct and indirect violence in other regions, and on currencies and terms of trade structured to the benefit of the central market.

Yet we must keep to a distance the assumption, central to Immanuel Wallerstein and indeed Braudel, that what really mattered for the process was the emergence of the city.²⁰ The metropolis should not be conceived as the first cause of the modern. Consumption, the focus of many useful recent attempts to understand early modern Europe, was often driven by new supply.²¹ This is visible, for example, in the evolution of the price of sugar in the sixteenth century: as Bartholomé de Las Casas noted in the *Historia de Las Indias*, an arroba of sugar, worth one ducat when only Valencia and the Canaries fed Spain's consumers, was worth twice this by the middle of the century, when Hispaniola and Puerto Rico were also 'under cane'. The eighteenth-century English consumer, the hero of C. Shamma and J. Brewer, was similarly responding to the influx of tropical foods and drugs. We need to recover a sense of the co-evolution of the centres and peripheries in response to supply and demand at many centres. The point is not that the development of Europe was made possible by expropriating wealth from the rest of the world. It is rather that what we now call Europe, Africa, the Americas and Asia were constructed together in the midst of a relationship, at once economic and cultural, military and political, which tended and still tends to allocate to the West a disproportionate share of the power to command and consume resources. The semi-voluntary 'industrious revolutions' at the centre depended on coerced latifundial labour at frontiers, and the consequences of both continue. Kenneth Pomeroy's *The Great Divergence* makes precisely this argument: that it was access to the resources (and labour power) of the

Atlantic which gave Europe real advantages over China in terms of long-term growth.²²

The significance of Eric Williams's *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944) has often been misconstrued by those who assumed that his argument concerned the impact of the direct profits of slaving on Britain's economy and society.²³ This approach may be compared to an attempt to understand the significance of the opium trade for Britain, India and China by merely examining the accounts of the merchants involved. Summing the profits yielded by the exchange of Jamaican and Rhode Island rum or East Indian and Lancashire cottons or Birmingham guns on the Guinea coast for labour power is a similarly incomplete way to explore the meaning of slaving. In both these cases, we ignore the immediate stimulus to some (and paralysis to other) economic activity which such trades provide, and neglect completely long-term social and economic effects. Such calculations are founded on the error of taking exchange value to be a fair guide of use value, and indeed of taking money, the most mercenary and mythical of 'real' measurable things, as a means of judging the meaning of an exchange between two economic systems. Williams, as J.E. Inikori has argued, saw the real significance of the slave trade and plantation slavery not in profits or capital generated, but in the dynamism it gave to world trade between the fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries, and the new structures of capital, labour, production and services it mobilized.²⁴

By 1690, Dalby Thomas could write that 'sugar has contributed more to England's pleasure, glory, and grandeur than any other commodity we deal in or produce, wool not excepted'.²⁵ Davenant, a few years later, estimated that the plantation trade accounted for £720,000 of England's £2 million external commerce, and much of his estimate for European trade amounted to re-exports.²⁶ Around slaving and the plantation trade emerged ship-building, insurance (the original business of the gentlemen of Lloyd's coffee house), banking (the basis of the Barclay family's enterprise), and a great deal of textile and metal manufacture. What the building of ships for the transport of slaves did for Liverpool, Eric Williams noted, the manufacture of cotton goods to clothe slaves did for Manchester. 'The first stimulus to the growth of Cottonopolis came from the African and West Indian markets.'²⁷ The aggregate trade figures conceal the importance of these peripheries in the statistic that Europe in the mid eighteenth century provided 47 per cent of imports and 62 per cent of exports: the Atlantic represented Britain's fastest growing markets.²⁸ The literally captive markets of the New World kept British wool workers employed in an era in which competition drove their products from Europe.²⁹ In 1772, 72 per cent of all English copper and brass was cent of broadcloth, and about 40 per cent of all English copper and brass was going abroad chiefly to Africa and the New World.³⁰ Estimates of the changes in British pig-iron output and export relative to raw material supply similarly argue the importance of export into the Atlantic trade system.³¹ Atlantic trade, dominated by sugar and slaves, was the most dynamic sphere of Britain's

eighteenth century economy. It was vital to the growth of London and Bristol, Glasgow and Liverpool, to cotton and iron workings, shippings, insurance, banking, and to the three million new urban jobs created between 1700 and 1801 which were the reality behind Smith's vision of 'division of labour'. From the end of the seventeenth century until the 1820s, sugar was consistently the most valuable British import until it was replaced by another slave-grown commodity: cotton.³² The slave plantations were also an important debt frontier: the perpetually insolvent plantations, and their commodities, were important objects of financial speculation, and a source of direct and indirect revenue streams.

The Old World was tugged into the modern by the New. The first British working class had been made on the sugar plantations of the New World in the 1660s, 1670s, and 1680s.³⁴ Plantation sugar production, as we noted earlier, was large scale, capital intensive, and machine dependent like no other industry in Britain before the mid eighteenth century. Structured gangs were composed of free and semi-free whites, and black slaves worked in units of over a hundred, divided into a variety of different tasks, operating in harmony with the *ingenio* under the strict time discipline of its bell. Slave populations, like the factory workers of nineteenth-century Clydeside or the Ruhr, lived several hundred to the square mile, and depended completely on long-distance trade for food and other supplies and for the sale of their produce. Across the water in Europe, in succeeding decades, men and women, in response to this tropical industrial revolution, were pulled into new kinds of work as dockers, woollen and cotton cloth-makers, shipbuilders, sugar refiners, gunsmiths, and iron mongers, on the one hand, and bankers, *armateurs*, insurers, on the other. A hundred and fifty years later, the Mississippi-born African at the cotton gin, and the operatives in Lancashire's *ingenios*, were similarly collaborating in creating another new economy. In the 1840s, moreover, over two million sterling of abolitionist Manchester's textiles were destined for the backs of the slaves who toiled on the cane fields of north-eastern Brazil. Wages earned in England spinning slave-grown cotton for slave consumers went to purchase broad and woollen cloth imported from the temperate Americas and the Antipodes: helping thus to finance new new frontiers of white 'free-labour' settlement. Recognizing this, we can better understand the non-environmental facts which made possible what Alfred Crosby and Tom Tomlinson have teleologically styled the 'neo-Europes'.³⁵ One globalization, sugar-centred, underlay other, later moments in the global mobilization of land and labour.

Slaves and Three Kinds of Imperialism

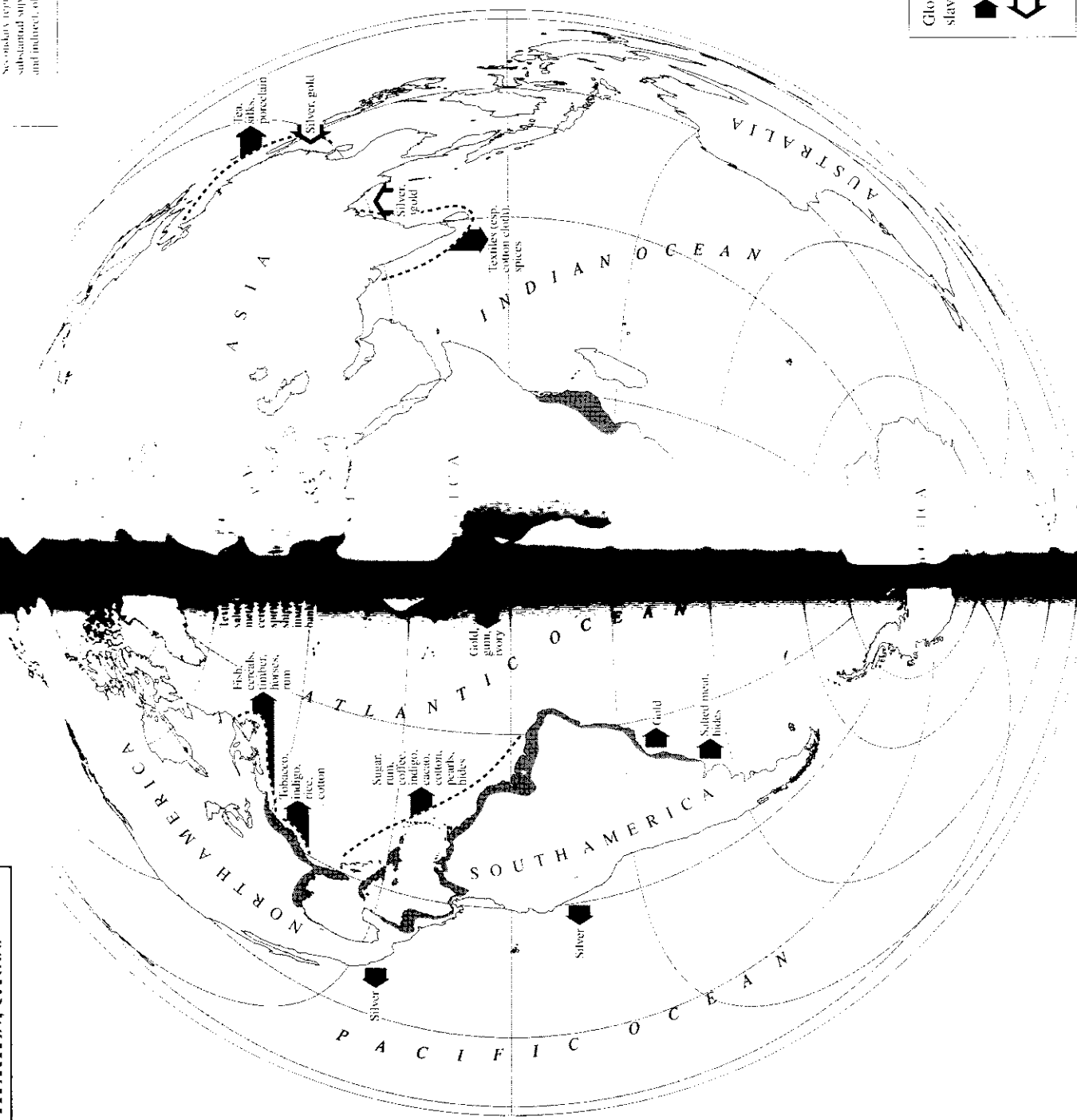
It is to this theme, the wider significance of slavery for the cycles of European expansion, that we now turn.

Plunder or asset-stripping is the most common original motive for

THE ATLANTIC SLAVE ECONOMY AND ITS PERIPHERIES, c.1800

Primary regions, where economic and demographic momentum were centered in the 18th century.

Secondary regions, where economies were under substantial supply and demand pressure, direct and indirect, of the Atlantic slave economy.



Global exchange surrounding slavery and slave trade:

- outflows of goods and services
- inflows of goods (only the Asian destinations of precious metals shown)

Spain, and until the seventeenth century it was the dominant one. Europeans went abroad principally in the hope of securing exotic resources which would quickly make them rich at home. Sometimes the means of simple plunder, elsewhere it involved trade with parties from whom information about the real value of commodities was withheld. The New World, Africa, and Asia, were short term means to Old World ends. The settlement of Spanish America flourished only where commodities might be easily extracted, and retreated, as in Hispaniola and Cuba, where these resources dwindled. Sugar production was introduced to the Spanish Caribbean principally as a means of rapidly extracting wealth; when other more direct forms of plunder appeared in Mexico and Peru, it quickly declined.

Slaves, in this first context, were more a currency, a kind of portable wealth, which might be extracted from a territory and sold where it was valuable. Columbus, for example, recommended to Ferdinand and Isabella that his domains might enrich the Crown, and help pay for the liberation of Jerusalem, by providing cargoes of Amerindian slaves for sale in the Mediterranean.³⁶ Hawkins and Drake, and three centuries of later English, Dutch and French slave traders, sought similarly to acquire bullion through the legal and illegal sale of Africans in Spanish America and Brazil. Slaving was central to the bullion flow which powered the massive expansion of the money supply in early modern Europe. The cod-hunters of St Malo and La Rochelle, and the herringmen of Bristol, converted themselves into fishers of men, and returned home with Guinea and Brazilian gold, and silver Spanish dollars. The luxuries of Calcutta and Canton – silks, calico, spices and tea – depended, in significant part, on bullion earned in selling Africans in the Americas. The recouping as specie of the profits of the East India companies, remitted in the form of cotton cloth to Europe, also depended significantly on export markets in Africa.³⁷ African slaves were thus a currency which, even at the dawn of the nineteenth century, were ultimately enabling the growth of European commerce and empire in Asia.³⁸

Colonization, in the classic Roman sense of the imposition of a settlement on a new landscape, is the second idiom of imperialism. It was for internal European strategic reasons that it became a priority at the end of the sixteenth century: the union of the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns, in the context of Philip II's aggressive confessional politics, stimulated English, Dutch and French commercial and colonial effort after 1580. In the Treaty of London (1604) and the Treaty of Antwerp (1609), Spain was forced to retreat from the presumptions of the Treaty of Tordesillas, and to concede that effective occupation of empty territory granted sovereign right. It was essentially for political, and not economic reasons, that plantation colonies were formed in the West Indies, and settlements in North America, in the first decades of the seventeenth century: agriculture was viewed essentially as an instrument of policy. Europeans were forced to inhabit Amerindian lifeways to survive: sleeping in hammocks and eating manioc, their poor and tiny settlements

clustered near sources of fresh water. Havel's European abroad of the 17th, imposing his style on the periphery, is an artifact of an era in which colonial 'bridgeheads' had prospered. Sugar cultivation was, initially, too difficult, and African slaves too expensive, to allow the implantation of the São Tomé regime.

Plunder, in different centuries for the Americas and Africa, subsidized colonization. The extraction of Amerindian labour, brazil wood and other dyestuffs, timber, furs and meat, quite apart from precious metals, made settlement possible. When Adam Smith argued that development and prosperity of the sugar islands were 'owing to the great riches of England of which a part had overflowed', he did not know that Dutch wealth, made in the Americas, financed the 'sugar revolution' in Brazil, Barbados and St Christopher, while plundered Spanish bullion paid for the development of Jamaica.⁴⁰ The sugar plantation was itself, for reasons discussed above, an extractive industry, but the plantation economies of the British and French West Indies prospered in a political context in which settlement had become a priority in its own right.

Slaves made sugar and tobacco settlement possible, and plantations were the cause of a massive wave of migration: perhaps as many as three out of every five people who crossed the Atlantic before 1800 were African.⁴¹ How many million Africans crossed the Atlantic will never be known with certainty but, given that many entered as unregistered contraband, we may guess that Curtin's famous estimate of less than ten million was far too low.⁴² Much of this life was wasted: in a context where a slave could be purchased for two-thirds of a ton of sugar, it was profitable to work him or her to death in three or six years, and life expectancy in the heyday of the sugar islands fell to as low as seven to nine years for new African arrivals.

The 'free-labour' farms of British North America depended on the consumption of the slave plantations of the West Indies.⁴³ It is worth noting, in passing, Pitman and Williams's surprising statistics on the relative importance to Britain of the West Indies and North America: in 1697 British imports from Barbados were five times in value those from the 'bread colonies', while imports from Jamaica in 1773 were similarly five times those from all the mainland settlements. Between 1714 and 1773, Montserrat (24 square miles) produced three times the value of British imports from Pennsylvania, Nevis (around 60 square miles) three times as much as New York, and Antigua (about 100 square miles) three times those of New England put together. The timber, wheat, fish, shingles, horses and cattle imported by the plantations thus made possible the growth of white settlement in the north, much as slave labour made possible the tobacco, indigo and rice colonies to the south. The merchants of Boston, and in particular Newport, came themselves to specialize in their own triangular trade, purchasing slaves in Africa with their famous 'double distilled' rum, which they sold in the West Indies, returning with molasses with which to make more rum. The cities of 'white' North America

this grew, like its farms, in response to distant tropical plantations. In time, the Yankee's wish to purchase molasses from the French West Indies would be an important fact in their revolutionary politics.

Settlement colonization came to depend on the idea of 'improvement': the proposition that nature might be made more fruitful through its appropriation by Locke's 'industrious and rational' men. The idea of 'improving' land led easily to the idea of 'improving' people. A third kind of imperialism was driven by those who understood themselves as cosmopolitans, and as the diffusers of universal progress. Raffles, in his memoir on British Commercial Policy in the East Indies of 1819, provided the most eloquent expression of this utopian self-delusion so central to the liberal despotisms of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: 'Our interests are so manifestly connected with the advancement and improvement of the native states, that it is obvious we can have no views which are not equally to their advantage.'⁴⁴ We may call it the imperialism of the division of labour, to give credit to the proposition which best expressed its genius. By the late twentieth century, the logic of cosmopolitan expansion was carried to its ultimate anti-colonial conclusion, and a bouquet of new flags adorned the powerless General Assembly of the United Nations.

The place of slaves in this third idiom of imperialism was complex and contradictory. On the one hand, division-of-labour imperialism presumed a world of free labour, of contracts freely entered into, and indeed its allies supported the anti-slavery movement. Yet the slaves of Brazil and Cuba, and the semi-slaves of the Dutch and British East Indies, were, as we have noted, important producers and consumers well into the nineteenth century, as important for the factories of Lancashire as they were for the progress of 'free-labour' settlement in Argentina and Uruguay. In our own age, one of the peculiar characteristics of the division of labour remains the dependence of the centres of global consumption on frontiers of coerced and sweated labour. Wage slavery, in Guatemala, the Philippines or China, is not always simply a metaphor. Somehow, classical political economy's dream of universal peace and abundance seems always to be deferred for those who live at lower latitudes, and increasingly too, as chronic malnutrition and diseases like tuberculosis extend their empires in the former Eastern bloc, for significant parts of the northern hemisphere. This is the space inhabited by what we today call 'globalization'. How far it stands from the old imperialisms remains to be demonstrated. There is no evidence that we have entered, definitively, an age in which the sovereignty and rights of peripheral peoples will be respected.⁴⁵

The Ghost of Globalization Past

Slave-powered globalization reached its climax in the early decades of the

nineteenth century, when it was the partner of industrialization and urbanization within Europe, and a principal direct and indirect cause of the settlement of European populations on new continents. It shared a world with newer regimes of taste and technology, religious and economic ambition, which it had helped to bring into being, and which in time would destroy it. In a few generations, emancipations would remove the whip and chain from the plantations, and crystals and syrups extracted from beet and maize would drive down the price of sugar. But the plantations remained, and spread their discipline into Africa, south Asia and the Pacific. Their legacies continue in the destructive ways we price labour and human life and share the resources of the planet, all the world of darkness which surrounded our self-congratulatory millennium fireworks.

Notes and References

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- 2 Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, I, ch. 5, para. 2/42.
- 3 Even the most skeletal outline of the historiography on the slave-sugar complex and its role in the development of the West would require a substantial essay; important recent interventions include R. Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800* (London, 1997); D. Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge, 2000); B. Higman, 'The Sugar Revolution', *Economic History Review*, 53 (2000), pp. 213-36.
- 4 What needs to be emphasized is the role of slavery and the Atlantic frontier in quickening new kinds of international exchange and the development of 'leading edge' sectors of commerce, finance and industry within Europe. For it is common, distracted by aggregate figures for the 'home' economy, for historians to lose sight of the central contribution of long-distance trade, for which slaves were central, to dragging 'the West' into the modern world. D. Eltis and S. Engerman in 'The Importance of Slavery and the Slave Trade to Industrializing Britain', *Journal of Economic History*, 60 (2000), pp. 124-44, for example, casually note that Barbados's product in 1700 was only the value of Rutland's (p.128), forgetting that the island was however a magnet for London's sail and the reason for a dozen new industries.
- 5 S. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power* (Baltimore, 1985) and J. Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry: An Historical Geography from its Origins to 1914* (Cambridge, 1989). See also N. Deerr's classic *History of Sugar*, 2 vols. (London, 1949).
- 6 C. Verlinden, *Esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale*, 2 vols. (Bruges, 1955); O. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986).
- 7 The sugar plantation complex is most elegantly described by Braudel in his chapter on islands, although few later discoverers seem to remember his passage: F. Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Paris, 1966 [1949]), pp. 139-40. Among contemporary authorities, see S. Greenfield, 'Madreica and the Beginning of New World Sugar Cane Cultivation and Plantation Slavery', in V. Rubin and A. Tuden (eds.), *Comparative Perspectives on Slavery in New World Plantation Societies* (New York, 1977), and W.D. Phillips,

- the Cold World Background of Slavery in the Americas', in H. Solow (ed.), *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System* (Cambridge, 1994).
- 25 B. Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Economy of a Brazilian Society: Bahia, 1500-1700* (Cambridge, 1986); D. Watts, *The Birth of a Nation* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 10.
- 26 Miller, 'The Southern Atlantic in Global Perspective', unpublished essay, 1999. I am grateful to Professor Miller for the opportunity to read a draft of this essay. Miller, without knowing it, echoes exactly the concern of Jean Meyer that la réalité pré-bressilienne reste dépendant bien modeste', in Meyer, *Histoire du sucre* (Paris, 1989), p. 77.
- 27 J. F. de Oviedo y Valdes, *Historia General y Natural de las Indias* (1535-57), vol. I, p. 224-6.
- 28 J. Ortiz, *Contrabando Cubano de Tabaco y el Azúcar* (Havana, 1940), pp. 276-9.
- 29 J. Williams (ed.), *Documents of West Indian History* (Port of Spain, 1963), p. 29.
- 30 Richard Pares, *Merchants and Planters* (Cambridge, 1960), still provides the best portrait of this system of trade and debt.
- 31 Even Robin Blackburn, surprisingly, seems to share in this misunderstanding when he writes that '[John] Locke's apparent endorsement of the development of the slave plantations does seem to argue the presence of what is, strictly speaking, a non-capitalist strand in his thinking', in Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, p. 275, n. 90.
- 32 I merely add here to that exploration of the spectrum of 'free' and 'slave' labour visible, *inter alia*, in S. Engerman (ed.), *Terms of Labour: Slavery, Serfdom and Free Labour* (Stanford, 1999) and S. Amin and M. van der Linden (eds.), 'Peripheral Labour? Studies in the History of Partial Proletarianization' (Cambridge, 1997).
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Empire, Knowledge and Culture: From Proto-Globalization to Modern Globalization

Knowledge' has emerged as a central problem in debates over both globalization and the study of imperialism. Analysts of globalization, especially Marshall McLuhan and Manuel Castells, have focused scholarly attention on the social and cultural transformations wrought by the new media and computer technologies central to our 'information age'.¹ Sociological discussions of knowledge and globalization, however, are often hampered by a narrow chronological framework, resulting in a frequent insistence on the unprecedented nature of contemporary change. Studies of imperialism, on the other hand, which address the theme of 'knowledge' generally pay less attention to technology and its effects, examining instead the ideological origins and uses of 'colonial knowledge'. While some of the most influential studies of knowledge construction in colonial contexts have been produced by historians, they have been overshadowed by works of a more literary sensibility informed by post-colonial theory. Such studies of 'colonial discourse' have enriched our understanding of the cultural aspects of imperialism by creating a theoretically sophisticated body of scholarship that has drawn our attention to previously neglected texts or to what seemed to be marginal in traditional readings.² Unfortunately, 'colonial discourse analysis' has not always embedded 'representation' in its material, social and political contexts and has frequently failed to deal with subaltern voices when they can be heard in the archives of empire.³ Most importantly, despite Edward Said's characterization of orientalism as a 'system of circulation', post-colonial criticism has largely ignored the complex transmission of ideas and texts across space and time.⁴ More generally, imperial historians and post-colonial critics alike are hesitant to deploy 'globalization' as an analytical starting point, let alone as an interpretative framework. On the few occasions it has entered the historical literature on empire, 'globalization' has been interpreted in a narrowly economic fashion; the cultural aspects of imperial globalization remain largely unexplored.⁵