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Robin Blackburn, Introduction: 'Why the Second Slavery?', Dale Tomich,. ed., *Slavery and Capitalism in the Nineteenth Century*, Lexington Books, Lanhan, MD, USA 2017, pp. 1-38

Eric Hobsbawm relates how at the end of one of his lectures a student approached him with the question: 'Professor, do I understand from the expression Second World War that there was a First World War?'. The anecdote illustrated the historian's fear that knowledge of history was becoming desperately truncated and shallow. The centennial of the Great War makes such a query unlikely today. However any reader could be forgiven for asking whether the expression the 'second slavery' implies that that there was a 'first slavery', and if so what is the distinction?

The term 'second slavery' has been adopted by historians of the slave regimes which flourished in the Americas in the 19th century, above all in the US South, Brazil and Cuba in the years 1800-1860, and which met their nemesis shortly thereafter (1865-1888).[1] The term 'second slavery' foregrounds the fact that slavery in the Americas did not wither and die in the post-colonial period. Another way of putting the point would be to say that industrialisation and the advent of modernity did not automatically spell the death of slavery but rather intensified and spread it. The result was a new American slavery which reworked and reorganised the institution.

The 'first slavery', in this view, was seen in the New World in the period 1520 to 1800. It was linked to the colonial systems of slavery elaborated by Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Britain and France, and which were eventually

[1] The term was coined by Dale Tomich in a 1988 essay reprinted in Dale Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery: Labor, Capital and World Economy*, Lanham 2004, especially pp. 56-74. For work that uses the concept see Márcia Berbel, Rafael Marquese, Támis Parron, *Escravidao e Política: Brasil, e Cuba, 1780-1850*; Sao Paulo 2010; Rafael de Bivar Marquese, *Feitores do Corpo, missionarios de mente: Senhores, letrados e o controle dos escravos. nas Americas, 1660-1860*, Sao Paulo 2004; Enrico del Lago, *American Slavery, Atlantic Slavery and Beyond: the US 'Peculiar Institution' in International Perspective*, Boulder 2012; Charles Post, *The American Road to Capitalism*, Chicago 2011.

shaken and wound up by a wave of insurrection and abolition between 1791 and 1848. In some cases empire was defeated but not slavery, in others slavery was suppressed but not empire.

The first slavery was colonial in character, with its legal and socio-economic underpinnings deriving from the Old World. especially the Mediterranean. Though it took time, the first slavery involved two novel institutions, an oceanic slave trade and the American slave plantation. Prototypes developed on the Atlantic islands and then imitated in Brazil and the wider Caribbean. The sugar plantations of Barbados and the tobacco plantations of Virginia became major suppliers. Never before in history had there been sea-borne empire like this, acquiring forced labourers in one continent, assembling and exploiting them in another, in order to produce items of popular consumption in a third.

The slave systems that arose in the New World owed much to the example of slavery in Ancient Greece and Rome. Slavery in the Americas adopted crucial features of Roman law. Thus in the case of slavery the condition of the child followed that if its mother, whereas other social identities followed the father. Roman slavery was distinguished by a strong sense of private ownership and property. It was 'chattel slavery' and so was the slavery of the New World. The prestige of the Ancient world, and the fact that Christian teaching took slavery for granted, gave the institution legitimacy. However there were important differences. [2]

In the Ancient world slavery was concentrated in the metropolis while with the New World's 'first slavery' the slaves were concentrated in overseas colonies

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[2] Indeed one could argue that the 'first slavery' was that of Ancient Greece and Rome, so that the 'second slavery' was that of the New World. However I will not use the term in this way, since it is helpful to distinguish different phases of New World slavery. For the direct links between Roman and New World slavery see Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, London 1974, pp. 24, 422, note 32.

and there were few or no slaves in the metropolis. The planters of the ‘second slavery’ did not accept this colonial status, throwing it off in the case of the United States and Brazil, aspiring to autonomy or independence in the case of Cuba.

Both the first and the second slavery in the Americas became a far more thoroughly commercialised than was the case for Ancient slavery. In the Ancient world many of the slaves brought to Rome, or working Roman estates, had been captured by Roman commanders. The European traders of the early modern and modern period purchased slaves from African merchants and rulers. The New World planters themselves bought many other inputs from colonial merchants and aimed to sell tropical and sub-tropical slave produce in European markets. In the colonial epoch the ‘first slavery’ was organised into mercantile monopolies, such that English or French or Portuguese colonists were obliged to sell their produce only to national carriers. The European colonists sometimes began as free lance settlers who did not welcome colonial control but they found themselves obliged to accept metropolitan authority because the colonial powers controlled the sea-lanes and harbours.

These colonial systems were belligerent and rivalrous, with a stormy sequence of wars as well as an undertow of commercial competition. Compared to the slavery of the Ancient world, that of the Americas was less diverse, more concentrated in menial employment and more racialized, fastening its shackles on black Africans and those of African descent. The ‘first slavery’ developed in a late feudal, early modern world where capitalism was in its infancy. The ‘second slavery’ was caught up in a process of large scale industrialisation and extended ‘primitive accumulation’. The spread of capitalist social relations in the 16th and 17th centuries put money in new hands and encouraged increasingly market dependant forms of existence. Many grew to expect their basic needs to be met by the money they earned rather than their own produce.

The ‘first slavery’ in the Americas was extraordinarily successful but highly lop-sided and ultimately self-destructive. In the most successful colonies the enslaved came to outnumber the free by ten to one. Around 1770 slave produce dominated Atlantic commerce and had created great fortunes in Bordeaux and Liverpool, London and New York, Boston and Nantes. Financial institutions made great use of ‘letters of credit’ drawn on the plantation suppliers. Colonial slave systems were plagued by conflict and instability, as planters, merchants and colonial officials quarrelled over the division of the spoils and as the different colonial powers disputed control of territory, rivers and sea-lanes. Financial speculation and crisis bred insecurity. Colonies like French Saint Domingue and British Jamaica where, the free people of colour came to outnumber the whites, proved especially vulnerable. In the century and a half prior to 1776 conflict over American territory and slave produce fuelled imperial conflict. The outbreak of the War for American Independence (1776-83) challenged imperial power, struck a blow for free trade, and injected an ideological appeal into a struggle that was no longer simply about territory and dynastic aggrandisement. This trend was accentuated by the French Revolution, the Anglo-French wars (1792-1815), the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) and the wars for independence in Latin America (1810-24). The great commanders and statesmen now had to reckon with the challenge of slave revolt, abolitionist movements and projects of emancipation.

There is more to be said about the rise and fall of the ‘first slavery’, topics I have addressed in other work (*The Making of New World Slavery, 1492-1800* and *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848*). Here I focus on the question ‘why the second slavery?’ as a prelude to addressing how it worked and why it was eventually defeated.

The New World’s ‘second slavery’ dates from around 1790, reached its high point at mid-century and had been entirely suppressed by 1888, when Brazil

enacted the last emancipation. Even historians who do not use the concept have registered that the growth of plantation slavery in the United States, Cuba and Brazil in the period 1820 to 1860 represents a significant clustering and displays certain important common features, as well as some interesting contrasts.[3]

The ‘second slavery’ represented a more autonomous, more durable and, in market terms, more ‘productive’ slave regime, capable of withstanding the onslaught of the Age of Revolution and of meeting the rising demand for plantation produce. Colonial slavery had from the beginning been linked to the expansion of markets associated with the rise of capitalism in Northwestern Europe. By the early decades of the 19th century the Industrial Revolution was vastly expanding demand and supplying crucial inputs to the plantation and to the trade in plantation produce. The ‘second slavery’ was largely ‘post colonial’, with the planters enjoying a more direct relationship to power. This new American slavery flourished as mercantilism was dismantled and as the age of steam revolutionised transportation and processing.

Some critiques of colonial slavery argued that it was only commercially viable thanks to mercantilist protection. Eric Williams, the Trinidadian historian and national leader, argued this case in his widely influential book *Capitalism and Slavery*, first published in 1944. But this claim was too narrowly focussed. The British West Indian planters did flourish thanks to the ‘sugar duties’ which gave them privileged access to the British market. But the dismantling of mercantilism in the aftermath of the American Revolution, and other Atlantic revolutions, brought ruin to some planters but offered encouragement and widening outlets to many more. British and French planters, once the richest in the hemisphere, saw themselves demoted and marginalised. But when trade

[3] See for example, Laird Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba and the United States*.Cambridge 2007.

restrictions were lifted, cotton planters in the US, sugar planters in Cuba and coffee planters in Brazil all flourished.

The 'second slavery' should not be too sharply set apart from the 'first slavery' since there were major themes of continuity. While some features of the first (colonial) slavery had exhausted their usefulness, or had been shown to be dangerous, many of the core features of plantation slavery remained and were adapted to new conditions and new technologies. At this point I will only briefly note these processes since explaining them is the task of the chapters which follow. However some preliminary points will indicate a direction of travel and a knot of problems needing clarification.

Those who have advanced the concept of the 'second slavery' see it as a mutation of the 'first'. Both types of slavery consigned a racially-defined sub-group of captives to forced labour on premium staples. Both organized slaves in gangs, or via a 'task' system. The plantation labour force was itself valued as a commodity. In both regimes the slaves were chattels who could be bought and sold, without regard to family ties. Yet both rested on so-called 'natural economy'. Both encouraged the slaves to meet their own food needs by cultivating maize, tending chickens and by working garden plots in their scant few hours of 'free time'. The precarious slave family or community would try to assert rights of possession over domestic animals, or provision grounds, or burial grounds, and overseers might sometimes concede these rights. The slaveowners as a body reserved the right to sell off slaves whenever necessary or convenient. The so-called 'natural economy' was thus a site of class struggle, though one in which, in 'normal' times, the dice were loaded in favour of the master class, because of the latter's access to resources and control of organized force (on which more in the next two chapters). The planters could also use slaves on construction, or in tasks demanding great skill, at little or no extra

cost. Clearly all these aspects of the slave regimes were not minor features and suggest strong continuity.

.But the 'second slavery' certainly had original features too. The 'second slavery' was a species of de-colonized slavery, one that claimed sovereignty and aspired to stand on its own two feet. Planters played a leading role in the independence struggle in North America, especially if we recognise that this struggle had a protracted character, and that it was not fully accomplished in 1783, or 1787, or 1815, but was still reaching for new boundaries and new content in the 1820s and beyond. The Empire of Brazil was formally declared in 1822 but there was a prior experience of autonomy from Portugal and, as we will see, many subsequent efforts to attain real independence. Cuba never ceased to be a Spanish colony but its leading men reshaped the colonial pact, manipulated metropolitan politics and advanced the independent interests of the *sacarocracia*, or sugar lords.

The 'second slavery' supplied the broad markets reached by 'free trade' and *comercio libre*, by industrialisation and the 'market revolution'. With the old mercantilism swept away there was no room for manufacturing bans or monopolies but some tariffs remained and the state regulated the market in land. The 'second slavery' needed a supportive and friendly state but was not state supervised. It was strongly focussed on plantations and farms, and the plantations had a more industrial character. The 'second' slavery' was in some respects more 'modern' – and more 'productive', if we only consult marketed output - but certainly not 'better' or more humane. The 'second slavery' was linked to the 'speed up' of industrial capitalism and, as it expanded, the number of gruelling tasks to be performed multiplied. This new American slavery had an even more intensely racial character than its colonial predecessor. This particularly concerned the status of free people of colour. In the last years of colonial slavery in the French and British islands their numbers increased and

their status improved, albeit not without conflict. With the advent of a more rigorous plantation regime, with strong demand for plantation 'hands', and with the fears aroused by the 'age of revolution', manumission became more difficult and there was a deterioration in the condition of the free coloured. The main territories of the 'second slavery' had natural advantages when it came to cultivating the key commodities – sugar in Cuba, cotton in the US South and coffee in Brazil. The systems of colonial slavery had lacked the land needed to expand output. The planters had offset this constraint by introducing fertilisers, new crop varieties and irrigation systems (notably in Saint Domingue and British Guyana), but nothing that could compare with the huge spaces which were to be seized by the planters of the 'second slavery'. The latter developed a strong competitive edge but their expansion was also the result of physical, military, encroachment and conquest, at the expense of other states and of the indigenous peoples. In chapter three I will argue that slave plantations did not impose monoculture but certainly the growth of the principal commodities in the epoch of the 'second slavery' was imperative and aggressive enough to earn them royal or noble titles, 'King Cotton', 'Su Majestad el Azucar', and Baron Coffee.

That planters exercised political power in the regime of the 'second slavery' is not to say that they monopolised such power. Each of these territories was part of a larger political entity, respectively part of the North American Republic, part of the Brazilian Empire, and a formal colony of Spain. (I will be arguing that Cuba was a very unusual type of colony, unlike any seen in the prior history of the Americas). In all cases the planters, and the merchants and bankers linked to them, enjoyed privileged access to power but also needed social and political allies, both in the plantation zone and outside it..

The foundational event of the 'second slavery' was the American Revolution, yet it took several decades for plantation growth to be established in major new

territories. In a wave of upheavals from 1776 to 1825 the New World planters, and the merchants linked to them, were often crucial protagonists, whether as revolutionaries or as counter revolutionaries. Their's was a difficult feat, catching the tide of change while not being inundated by it.

For many reasons the planters of the US South played a crucial role in the rise of the 'second slavery' – and in its downfall too. Around 1800 there were more slaves in Brazil than in the United States, but the Portuguese colony was smothered by a peculiarly elaborate mercantilist system. By 1820 there were 1.5 million slaves in the United States, 1.1 million in Brazil and perhaps 350,000 in Cuba. By 1860 there were 3.5 million slaves in the US South, 1.0 million in Brazil and 400,000 in Cuba. The planters of the US South were able to count on the steady growth of the slave population, while the Cuban and Brazilian planters struggled to expand the size of slave crews by recourse to the slave traffic (contrasts to be explored in chapter 4 below). In this later year there were some 40,000 planters in the US South, about 10,000 in Brazil and 2,000 in Cuba. These estimates are rough and ready, and do not properly account for the different role and character of slaveholders in the three societies. While they begin to indicate the differential power of the planter class in the three areas the discrepancy was even greater than they imply, because of the respective maturity of their plantation systems and their respective level of economic integration. Thus the US South had 15,000 miles of railroad in 1860, Cuba 800 miles and Brazil 600 miles. The 'white' population of the US South in 1860 was around 7 million, with many smaller slaveholders aspiring to became planters. In Cuba the white population comprised almost a half of the total while in Brazil whites were only a quarter of the total and were outnumbered by the free people of colour.

In both colonial and post colonial systems of slavery the plantation was in many ways an island, standing apart as a social isolate. Slaves were forbidden to

travel outside it unless they had a pass signed by the overseer. Slaves were formally barred from learning to read or write. Such rules might not always be enforced but the spirit they breathed was still telling. The literacy of whites in the US South was significantly below that of whites in the North, but still amounted to around two thirds of the whole. Literacy in Cuba and Brazil lagged far behind that of the US South.

Re-making New World Slavery

By the early nineteenth century the dangers and drawbacks of owning slaves had become rather obvious. Slaves often hated their masters even when they feigned love for them. They would steal from their owners and conspire against them. Given the opportunity they would run away or join a revolt. Of course there were paternalist masters and grateful slaves, but intense ambivalence even then. The planters of the Americas were often protagonists of the Age of Revolution and knew both that ending colonial rule transformed their prospects for commercial and territorial expansion, and that it obliged them to take full responsibility for keeping their slaves in subjection, despite new opportunities for resistance and escape. The numbers of slaves who escaped thanks to the Seven Years War (1756-63) was probably not more than a few hundred at most. The Spanish monarch offered freedom to escaping slaves belonging to British owners but the journey down to St Augustine was long and exposed. In contrast at least thirty or forty thousand slaves escaped or gained manumission during the course of the War of Independence. We will explore below how this came to pass but the great majority sought the British lines, while about a tenth of the total joined up with the rebel forces, mainly serving as substitutes in the militia of Northern states.

The challenge to slavery was political or philosophical not simply a consequence of heightened security fears in time of war. The ideological threat to slavery came together in the 1760s with the first anti-slavery writings and legal challenges.

In an Atlantic world beset by revolution the questioning of slavery was at first overshadowed by the great issue of popular sovereignty and its proper scope and consequences. Neither the American Declaration of Independence, nor the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, nor the US Constitution and Bill of Rights, addressed the plight of the two to three million enslaved persons in the Americas. But the Pennsylvania assembly did approve a moderate emancipation law in 1780 after public debate, and in 1787 the British Society for the Abolition of the Atlantic slave trade had begun to mobilize public opinion on a large scale, with mass petitions and well-attended meetings and a flood of pamphlets and newspaper articles. This first abolitionist movement attracted support from parliamentarians but its momentum was broken in 1792 by an Anti-Jacobin panic. The Revolutionary terror in France and a huge slave revolt in Saint Domingue, the New World's richest colony, persuaded the parliamentary abolitionists that the time was not ripe to press their case. English radicals had to fight for their own survival as they became the target of 'Crown and Anchor' mobs (named for a tavern the mob frequented). Edmund Burke's *Reflections* attacked the French Revolution for fostering servile savagery and actual cannibalism.

The 19th century planters sponsored new political formulae, negotiated new social alliances and inherited, adapted and reconfigured a 'racial contract' that would attract the support of the substantial bodies of non-slaveholding free persons to be found in these societies. Doctrines related to race, property and national interest were advanced to justify slaveholding and block abolitionist challenges. Like the old stereotypes the new racial concepts and stereotypes portrayed those of African descent as requiring physical compulsion and harsh restraint, and Indians as worthy only of contempt. . Presenting the resort to mass enslavement as the destiny of a new nation was a demanding proposition and different from trying to justify slavery in a distant colony. It led some to challenge class exclusion among

whites, giving rise to the racialized democracy of the white man's republic. .[4] Slaveholding both stimulated and warped the planter's vision of the good society and the national future. In the United States it led to the celebration of a white man's civilization explicitly resting on an underclass of black toilers.

The Cuban and Brazilian planters shrank from republicanism and moved cautiously towards greater autonomy but many began to call themselves 'Liberals', a term first applied to politics around the time of the Cortes of Cádiz in 1810. Some of these Liberals owned slaves themselves, and nearly all of them functioned in a political order which upheld slavery. Like North American Whigs they accepted a degree of racial exclusion but were uncomfortable with both slavery and democracy. They worked for a 'civilizing' and 'whitening' of the underlying population, a reduction in reliance on slaves, and a denial of active political rights to those without property. The worldviews of US Senator Henry Clay, José Bonifácio, the Brazilian statesman, Thomas Babington Macaulay, the British historian, Alexis de Tocqueville, the French historian, and José Antonio Saco, the Cuban historian, were not identical but they shared much in common, including their respect for a supposed European or North American civilizing mission, their acceptance of Atlantic political economy and their rejection of radical anti-slavery. While the radical racists embraced the 'second slavery' wholeheartedly, the liberals found its dynamism disturbing.

While slavery was undoubtedly a traditional institution, the 'second slavery', or new American slavery, represented an innovation, a fresh start, with new friends and new enemies, a new socio-political context, and new technologies. The main centres of growth in the period 1800-1830 were regions that had not previously been much involved in plantation development. The Mississippi Valley, the hinterland of Matanzas, or the interior of Sao Paulo offered vast new spaces for plantation agriculture but required the introduction of tens of thousands of

[4] The wider issues here are discussed in Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, Cambridge 2003.

labourers to clear the forest, build the roads and cultivate the staples. The indigenous peoples were deemed unsuitable, and anyway refused to be conscripted to these tasks. A number of planter statesmen –mainly those of a Liberal persuasion - urged the introduction of free immigrants from Europe but later experience was to show that any such scheme would require state initiative and cash on a massive scale. The planters of the Americas distrusted the state and were allergic to taxation. Eventually, in the mid 1880s, the state of Sao Paulo recruited hundreds of thousands of Italian migrants to work on the coffee estates. The planters had to concede a new status to the labourer and to dig deep into their pockets to pay for mass re-settlement. The experiment worked, though the planters still resented emancipation when it came in 1888..

In the early 19th century the planters of the Americas found it easier to buy slaves and mobilize them to the new regions. Innovators in many ways they chose not to innovate when it came to recruiting a labour force but instead to adopt and adapt the slave regime inherited from the colonial era. Because the demands made on that regime by the plantation were ever more persistent the slave condition was itself more tightly focused and more intensely racialized.

In contrast to the often absentee proprietors of the English and French Caribbean the planters of the US South, Brazil and Cuba were mostly resident on their estates, or in nearby towns. They lived in proximity to their slaves and could take personal responsibility for their estates. Their political leverage was very considerable. They were not just a 'lobby' but rather part and parcel of the ruling order. In the smaller Caribbean islands slaves comprised 80 to 90 per cent of the population, rendering these colonies particularly vulnerable to unrest. In the US South, Cuba and Brazil the enslaved were usually outnumbered by free persons who comprised never less than 44 per cent of the total. In Cuba and Brazil there were a growing number of free people of colour but few of these identified with the still enslaved and some actually owned slaves themselves. Great fortunes

were made in the Caribbean island colonies but plantation wealth was still only a fraction of total national wealth – around 5-6 per cent - reducing planter influence and making it easier to compensate them. The value of slaves loomed much larger in the United States and Brazil (where it comprised half of national wealth) and in Cuba too.

The cycle of wars and revolutions put American slave-owners on their mettle, as they mobilized old and new sources of social power. The revolutionary planters of the United States had taken a bold initiative at a time when anti-slavery was only a speck on the horizon. The *hacendados* of Cuba and *fazendieros* of Brazil were far more cautious, but by no means passive, as we shall see.

The large land-owners of Spanish South and Central America proved quite conservative during the liberation struggle, slow to move against Spain and hostile to radical democratic themes. But in the later stages of the struggle, and under the influence of Simon Bolivar, Vicente Guerrero and some other more radical leaders, the Liberators enrolled many black soldiers and gone beyond slave trade bans to endorse 'Free Womb' Laws (i.e. laws that freed future children born to slave mothers). In some of the new republics slavery was abolished outright in the 1820s (Chile and Mexico) while in others it lingered until the 1850s. These measures were very uneven and did little for racial equality despite the outstanding black contribution to Spain's defeat. But they did prevent the growth of a slave system in the new republics.[5] In this regard they may be compared to the anti-slavery measures that eventually wound down slavery in the Northern US states, especially those like New York (1799) and New Jersey (1804) where Free Womb laws phased out a slavery that had once been a significant presence. A few Southern planters yearned for such a solution but they became increasingly isolated. The overwhelming majority of planters clung on to their

[5] Jeremy Adelman, *Sovereignty in the Iberian Atlantic*, Princeton 2006, pp. 355-8.

human chattels and the claim that they were reluctant slaveholders grew increasingly threadbare.

The slave-owners of the American South, Brazil and Cuba were not deterred by slave bitterness or 'ingratitude', nor by the scorn of many free persons outside the slave zone. Even those public-spirited planters who admitted that the presence of slaves compromised the task of nation-building remained attached to slave-owning and contented themselves with token gestures and measures which did not actually reduce overall slave numbers. A US Colonization Society was established in 1816 to encourage slave manumission and resettlement, but it was a sham and never managed to ship more than a few thousand former slaves to Africa. Meanwhile the US slave population, numbered in millions, rose steadily despite the end of slave imports.

The Persistence of Slavery

Why did planters in the new regions remain or become slave-owners? In the case of some Eastern seaboard planters inertia, and the pleasure of lording it over their servants and neighbours, no doubt played a part. In later decades last ditch support for racial slavery morphed into the defence of a new regime of white supremacy, cherished by poor and middling whites as well as by planters. But in the construction of the 'second slavery' the planters' main motive was to make money, since by doing so they could pay off their debts, raise the value of their estates and secure their position in the master class. Making money required selecting the right crop, practicing good husbandry, an effective disposition of the labour force, and being skilful or lucky in deciding when to sell. Factors and merchants would help the planters, charging commission'

In the United States convention assigned the term 'planter' to those with more than twenty slaves. In Cuba the owner of a sugar estate would own many more, in Brazil the proprietor of a coffee estate somewhat less. But in all three regions the

average slaveholding was just 6 slaves, a figure much reduced by the fact that there were many who owned just one or two slaves. In each of these regions the young man with a parcel of slaves – whether half a dozen or twenty – would aspire to become a planter and would see his slaveholding as the stepping stone to wealth and status. Those constructing new plantations would usually bring some personal or family wealth and connections to the project in addition to a parcel of slaves. Even so they would require credit, as any plantation would take a few years to produce its first serious crop. In the meantime there were many expenses to meet (equipment, provisions, building materials, extra slaves, etc).

It was critical that there were merchants, store-keepers, factors and bankers willing to extend credit to planters. In fact the expense of bringing new lands into production as plantations was so considerable that in many cases it would not have happened unless such backers could be found. The willingness and ability of commercial backers to extend credit was, in its turn, an expression of their eagerness to obtain the premium staples and to participate in plantation profits.

From one point of view the slavery surge was a reflection of the consumer's willingness to lay out their often hard-earned cash on plantation produce. On the other it represented the slaveowner's wish to make good use of his asset. If he wished he could, for a while, subsist as a self-sufficient patriarch, living off slave produce and occasionally selling some of his slaves. But most aspired to more than this. Slaves were a form of capital, indeed a very tangible and mobile form of capital, leading most owners of a slave crew to wish to realize a return from them, with planting being, in the circumstances, the most promising bet. The logic of slaveholding capitalism offered encouragement to business-like behavior, but also some reassurance. Like any agricultural concern the plantation would have to contend with bad weather, plant diseases, pests, price swings and so forth. But from the investor or creditor's point of view there was always the reassuring thought that, in the event of difficulty, the value of the plantation, and its slave

crew, stood as the explicit or implicit collateral. Planters sometimes passed laws to protect their assets from seizure but they needed commercial backers and could not defy them for long.[6] However there were disasters that could not be hedged by means of slave collateral – epidemics and slave revolts, both of which destroyed capital value. The availability of insurance could reduce some of these risks, lending some resilience to the plantation enterprise at a price (and excluding slave revolt, a risk insurers declined).

The foregoing analysis of the new slavery suggests an interesting conclusion. The mercantile and banking elite of London and Paris, New York and Boston, New Orleans and Rio de Janeiro, Madrid and Havana bear a specific responsibility for the slavery surge. They could have offered credit only to intending yeoman farmers, who could have used family labour to cultivate cotton, coffee and sugar. They could have further backed the provision of processing facilities. But they did none of these things because slave-less farms were not a good credit prospect – they lacked 'collateral'. Slaveholding planters, on the other hand, had liquid assets at their disposal.

The personal wealth of the planters and the generally buoyant price of slaves makes it strange that there was ever any doubt about the profitability of slave-owning . The explanation, no doubt, is that the planters found themselves pitted in competition against one another, some in declining sectors, or working exhausted or marginal land. The great majority of planters had to borrow money to prepare the harvest and to offer part of the future crop as collateral. These arrangements still allowed planters to prosper in normal times, but the less successful found themselves deeper in debt and might be forced to sell some of their slaves.

That slave plantations in the Americas could be, and typically were, profitable is no longer in doubt. The detailed evidence will be scrutinized in the next two

[6] These issues here will be further explored below. But see Harold Woodman, *King Cotton and His Retainers*, 1968, and Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, New York 2013.

chapters. But here we note the seeming paradox of profitable plantations and indebted planters. The beneficiary of the toil of the slaves could be, and often was, those who supplied the planter with credit. There was also the waxing and waning of rival regions and crops. It took several decades before it became clear that Cuban conditions were more favourable to sugar and Brazilian conditions more favourable to coffee. During this time there were losers as well as winners in the planter class, with Cuban coffee estates closing, and selling their slaves to the sugar sector, while in Brazil sugar producers were eventually forced to yield to the more rapid advance of coffee, often selling their slaves to their coffee-producing rivals. It will be necessary below to scrutinize these contrasting paths more closely. But the overall conclusion is that slave-worked cotton, sugar and coffee estates were profitable, and that those who owned slaves were drawn to sell them to the planters who had the best prospect of garnering those profits.[7]

Plantation development required large amounts of coordinated labour which slaves could supply. It demanded invigilation of the work teams as they grabbed, picked or slashed their way across the ripening field. Cotton needs well-watered soil but a dry harvesting season; there should be at least 200 frostless days in the year, preferably more, and an average temperature of around 25 C in the middle months of the year.[8] The 'cotton belt' of the US South unites these conditions and, given the appropriate socio-political conditions, was bound to dominate world cotton output. New World producers also enjoyed an advantage over rivals, notably India and Indonesia, in that they were closer to European and North American markets. Though sugar cane could be grown in Louisiana, which became a major producer supplying over a third of the US market, a cold winter could damage the crop. Cuba had no less than 365 frost-free days in the year. The island also had an extensive central plain, making for ease of cultivation and

[7] Laird Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba and the United States,* Cambridge 2007, pp. 143-51,.

[8] R. W. Fogel and S. L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: the Economic of American Slavery*, New York 1974, p. 41.

transport when compared to Brazil with its rocky torrents and coastal escarpments. However once rail transport was available Brazil's hills were no problem for coffee planters – they enabled the slave gangs to be easily monitored.

Slaveholders had the critical resources needed to exploit the favourable terrain and climate of the US South, Cuba and Brazil. They had the labour force and credit needed to bring new land into production. The use of enslaved persons thus enabled the slaveholders to secure 'natural advantages'. In the 17th and 18th centuries small islands and coastal enclaves had offered good prospects to mercantilist colonial regimes. But the transportation revolution wrought by steamships, canals and railways opened up huge possibilities if only the new land could be secured, cleared and defended from rival claimants. The option for slave labour furnished a highly effective solution, at least in the short run.

In the aftermath of slavery each of the key regions of the 'second slavery' remained the global leader, using some mixture of immigrant labour, seasonal labour, share-cropping, small production and family labour. Modest wages were paid and some expenses met. But in opening up and working new lands, slave labour did offer great gain to the planters enabling them to siphon off some of the surplus commanded by a premium product. The working year was longer in these regions than in cooler latitudes, and this may have helped planters to bear the greater expense of assembling slave labour. As noted above, the 17th and 18th colonial regimes had already captured the gains of tightly coordinated labour, whether in gangs or in variants of the task system.[9] The planters of the 'second slavery' were able to achieve a more intense rhythm (as we will see in chapter 3). The 'narratives' written by slaves and former slaves make it quite clear that the

[9] The most comprehensive study iof the links between the first and the second slavery is Rafael de Bivar Marquese, *Feitores do Corpo, Missionários de Mente: senhores, letrados e o control dos escravos nas Americas, 1660-1860*, Sao Paulo 2004.

unremitting toil of the plantation was only maintained because of ferocious discipline and physical duress.

In the language of contemporary political economy the rise of Louisiana, the Mississippi Valley, Matanzas, the Paraiba Valley and Sao Paulo can be seen as a 'spacial fix' devised by the planters and their financial backers in New York, Liverpool, London and Paris. Defeated in the cane fields of the Caribbean they outflanked slave resistance by opening up the interior and spreading plantations to areas where they had not previously flourished. Steam transport – steamboats and rail roads – was an essential to achieving this fix and details of this contribution will be given in chapter 4..

The economic vicissitudes of 19th century planters will be explained in the third chapters. Here it is appropriate to develop the portrait already given of the 'second slavery' by stressing that it was very much defined by the watershed of the 'twin revolution' that is of the Age of Revolution', on the one hand, and of the Industrial Revolutions on the other.[10] Revolutionary political events had the capacity to doom some social forms while promoting others. The 'second slavery' demonstrated the institution's ability to mutate and evolve new forms, securing survival and seizing new commercial opportunities in the jaws of revolutionary events which could have consumed them whole. More broadly this evolution also testified to the onset of globalization, and to the contradictory impulses it imparted.

Globalisation and Slavery

New World slavery and the trades to which it gave rise emerged as a consequence and component of the 'first globalization'. This phase of human history was inaugurated by the maritime, commercial and colonial exploits of the Portuguese and Spanish in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. It involved

[10] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution*, London 1974.

truly global exchanges, involving precious metals mined in the Americas (gold and silver) being exchanged for luxury items of Eastern provenance (spices, silk and porcelain), carried aboard European ships. The Iberian monarchs retained control by establishing a system of convoys and a string of maritime strong points and coastal depots (‘factories’). . The precious metals boosted Spain’s military power and covered the cost of administering and defending its vast overseas empire. Looked at from the standpoint of Europe as a whole the inflow of specie allowed Christendom to pay for imports from the East. Late medieval and early modern Europe produced little of interest to Asian consumers but American silver and gold furnished acceptable payment and so financed the Eastern spice and luxury trades.

However Portugal’s trade with the East engaged only two or three galleons a year in the late 16th century while Spain’s Pacific trade between Mexico and the Philippines was carried in a single large vessel. The Spanish fleet that sailed between the Peninsula and the Caribbean often comprised a few dozen ships but it carried European goods to the Americas and, apart from silver, little American produce on the journey back to Europe. This early globalisation or ‘archaic-globalisation’ did little or nothing to alter popular consumption patterns in Europe and created only a few tiny enclaves in the East.

The Spanish conquest of the New World had a devastating impact on the indigenous peoples, with tens of millions dying as a result of unfamiliar diseases, the break-up of their communities and systematic overwork. Bartolomé de las Casas, the man whose writings alerted the whole of Europe to this disaster, persuaded the Spanish monarch to ban the enslavement of Indians in the 1540s. To his own later regret Las Casas suggested that hardy Africans could serve as a substitute. Facing a labour shortage, and wishing to maximize colonial revenue, the Spanish authorities licensed Portuguese merchants to bring African captives to the New World where they could sell them to colonists. The

latter paid good money to acquire badly needed servants and labourers. For nearly a century slaves were an ancillary labour force in Spanish America, working in the household, or in gardens or workshops, or as artisans building towns and fortifications. The great bulk of the mining labour force remained indigenous, with some being temporary tribute labourers from the Indian villages, and others being wage labourers, *yanaconas*, formerly slaves to the Incas who had been freed by the Spanish. This initial phase of the enslavement in the Americas was shaped by Mediterranean patterns of bondage which allowed their first African slaves or their descendants a measure of autonomy in their work and the opportunity to buy their freedom if they worked hard for many decades, earning money as peddlers or artisans. António Dominguez Ortiz points out that the slaves found in Spain in the late medieval period could be white or black, and were themselves 'sumptuary goods' – signs of wealth or items of luxury.[11] This captures something of the slave's status in Spanish America too. Such a status did not prevent slaves also being very useful and, when leased out or allowed to ply a trade, profitable too.

By 1650 persons of African birth or descent comprised half the population of Havana, Vera Cruz, Mexico City and Lima in Spanish America, and similar or greater proportions in Salvador or Recife in Brazil. Half of these people of colour were formally free. They might owe their former owner a measure of deference but they dominated various trades and had their own religious brotherhoods. In 1653 the Portuguese defeated a 30 year long Dutch attempt to capture Brazil by organizing a black military force, the Henriques, an example the Spanish authorities were later to follow. The racial regime in these Iberian colonies involved an elaborate racial social hierarchy, different in its functioning from the highly polarised and permanent regime of mass racial enslavement that appeared in the English colonies following the rise of the

[11] Antonio Dominguez Ortiz, *La Esclavitud en Castilla durente la Edad Moderna*, Granada 1952.

plantation. The more complex and flexible Iberian pattern of 'baroque slavery', in the early colonial period bequeathed residues and echoes, even long after the plantation revolution, in cities where it had flourished, such as Havana, Salvador and New Orleans.

Globalisation acquired added depth and scope in the mid-seventeenth century and after, propelled by the rise of capitalist social relations in the countryside and towns of North Western Europe. This development put money in the purses and pockets of wider layers of the population. English tenant farmers needed to produce wheat, wool and other commodities for sale so that they could pay rent to their landlords . Their sales income also allowed them to hire wage labourers to boost output. As employers they had an incentive to buy labour-saving equipment. Their sales income also allowed them to pay lawyers' fees and government taxes. The cash economy embraced necessities as well as luxuries, and enabled commoners to smoke a pipe of tobacco or buy sugar to make preserves, cakes and sweetened beverages. Merchants and manufacturers found wider markets and sought to control the supply of these exotic products. They found that New World plantations could furnish them with growing quantities of the items their customers craved - tobacco, sugar, coffee, and chocolate. The Indian peoples had helped the colonisers to discover, adapt and consume some of these items but they shunned the plantations and were deemed to make very poor slaves. The English and French merchants introduced indentured servants from Europe who bound themselves to work on the plantations for three or four years in return for passage to the colonies, and the promise of land once their time was up. But unfamiliar diseases, and lack of tropical survival skills, carried off many of the young Europeans. The numbers willing to sell themselves into plantation bondage shrank and the planters turned to a more expensive, but also more effective, labour source. The Portuguese had long purchased captives on the African coast for work in sugar estates in Brazil and the Atlantic islands. By

the 1650s the Dutch, English and French were doing likewise in the Caribbean, but on a larger scale. Once it became clear that Africans were resilient and self-reliant, and that they could be coerced for gang-labour on the plantations, the Dutch, English and French traders broke into the Portuguese monopoly and each year brought tens of thousands of enslaved Africans to the Caribbean and North America.

The slave ship and the plantation became the vehicles of a great confinement that was to haul millions from Africa so that they could toil in the American plantations to produce exotic drugs and treats for sale to Europe's new consumers. There was a darkening of the plantation labour force as the number of indentured Europeans or captive Indians dropped to tiny proportions.

By the beginning of the 18th century the plantations of Brazil and Barbados, Jamaica and Martinique, Virginia and Saint Domingue, were staffed by hundreds of thousands of captives purchased on the African coast. Around the year 1714 there were three hundred thousand such slaves, and their descendants, toiling on the new plantations. With rising demand for tied labour the colour coding of the enslavement of 'negro(e)s' was more insistent and permanent than ever before. By 1770 the enslaved black population of the Americas had grown to 2,300,000. A small number of highly paid free workers were engaged on the larger plantations as drivers, book-keepers or doctors but planters were producing a premium crop and wished at all costs to avoid a labour force that could threaten to withdraw labour at a critical point in the harvest.

The new consumption patterns required many thousands of ships, not the handful engaged in the Eastern trades. Mass demand was matched by mass production and permanent regimes of racial enslavement. Atlantic commerce became ever more massive, carrying as many as a hundred thousand or more

captives from Africa each year and competing with, or complementing, the productions of other continents.

From the Invention of Breakfast to the Success of Cotton Underwear

The consumption of the exotic new commodities was intimate and pervasive, drawing those who smoked or chewed tobacco, or drank sweetened tea or coffee into a new sub-culture and into dependence on the market. Jan de Vries cites the 'invention of breakfast', with its sweetened coffee or tea, and its links to a new economy of time-keeping, as a new 'package' that reorganised household consumption and gave European merchants a competitive edge. Christopher Bayly picks up the concept and relates it to international commerce: 'some of the key consumables in the industrious revolutions of Europe and the Americas were tropical products: tobacco, coffee, sugar and tea. The corollary of this is that Europeans and their colonists were the greatest beneficiaries of the new [global] networks. Chinese, Arab and African merchants certainly prospered yet by far the greatest "value added" was grabbed by Europeans'[12].

In registering this interconnection care must be taken not to confuse the 'industriousness' of the European household with the harsh toil of the plantations, as Bayly sometimes does. The two were linked without being the same, as Bayly seems to suggest when he writes: 'The slave system of the Caribbean represented the ultimate, forced, industrious revolution'.[13] The global leverage enjoyed by European traders reflected both their maritime supremacy and their access to plantation produce. The forced labour of the slave plantations of the Americas yielded a flood of produce that did indeed complement the time economy of the 'industrious revolution' but differed from it in crucial respects. The novelty of the latter, and of wage and salaried labour

[12] C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons,* Oxford 2004, p. 51-2.,

[13] Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World,* p. 6.

more generally, was its embedded, 'voluntary' and self-willed character. The wage-workers' household had horizons and an element of flexibility and self-control denied to the slave. The willingness of such workers to accept longer and more intense hours of labour reflected the 'dull compulsion' of economic necessity, albeit with penny packets of tobacco or sugar brightening a few moments of recreation. Karl Marx insisted that the working class household differed from the slave cabin in its access to a diverse range of social products, notably including newspapers, a cultural item with great political importance.[14]

It was physical not economic compulsion which kept the plantation slave at work. This statement identifies the critical element in the social relations of slavery and does not exclude a more complex account of everyday motivations and inherited practices and assumptions. The African captives originally purchased by the New World planters had been overwhelmingly young adults with experience of agricultural labour and team work. As captives, they knew that hard labour would very probably be their lot. But none of this meant that slaves accepted enslavement, especially the permanent and rigid slavery, and unrelenting toil, that awaited them in the American plantations. Planters and overseers were keenly aware that, left to themselves, the slaves would not exert themselves for the planters' benefit but would cultivate foodstuffs on their plots, or even purloin a small quantity of the cash crop that they could sell or barter to itinerant peddlers or in local markets. Any lapse in vigilance would prompt the slaves to neglect the staple, to 'help themselves' or escape. The enslaved were obviously not 'beneficiaries' of the globalised networks. Indeed their remoteness and invisibility was among the reasons that their miserable fate could be ignored or discounted. The slave's resistance to regimentation and hard labour could only be overcome by the whip, the handsaw (*palmatorio*) and the stocks, and a whole carceral organisation of plantation society to support it.

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[14] See Karl Marx, 'Results of the Immediate Process of Production', *Capital*, volume I, London 1975, p. 1031`.

Punishment and patrols were needed to ensure and enforce labouring for the good of the plantation and its owner. Against this background petty privileges, concessions and incentives could also be offered (or withdrawn).

The psychology and context of forced labour and the slave household was the antithesis of Jan de Vries's 'industrious revolution'.[15] Typically the slaves were marched out to the fields around 4.0 am or 5.0 am without the benefit of 'breakfast', eating their first meal of the day a little before noon. Enslaved persons showed much ingenuity and effort in supplementing the limited and monotonous diet that was supplied to them by their owners, but the slave household did not have anything like the flexibility or market engagement of the free European or North American 'industrious' household when it came to allocating overall labouring time, or selecting a basket of consumption goods. The slave households had few cooking or eating utensils and no sewing machines. The first slavery in Saint Domingue and Jamaica had seen extensive slave participation in Sunday markets, but the evidence to be considered in chapter 4 suggests that there were fewer markets and that peddlers played only a modest role.

My remarks are directed at the view that the industrious revolution and plantation slavery were kindred social phenomena but not at all of the often strong link between the two, as the demand for the produce of the slave plantations itself tempted more farmers and wage labourers into greater involvement in market-related activity, with sweetened coffee and other such items being a key element in the package that transformed the desires of consumers. Jan de Vries himself stresses the stimulus received from this quarter. [16] He cites the pioneering role of Sidney Mintz in this regard, quoting his classic study, *Sweetness and Power*, and commenting on it in the following

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[15] Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution, Consumer Behaviour and the Household Economy, 1650-the present*, Cambridge 2008, pp. 1-40.

[16] De Vries, *The Industrious Revolution*, pp. 32, 134-6. 155-9.

passage: '"The first sweetened cup of hot tea to be drunk by an English worker was a significant historic event, because it prefigured the transformation of an entire society, a total remaking of its economic and social basis..." Mintz..asks his reader to believe that all the things that followed from this act (a mass change of consumer behaviour, consumerism, slave-based plantation economies, colonialism, capitalism) were truly consequences of a fatal inherent taste...The approach to consumer tastes I have presented..seeks to contextualize and thereby endogenize the process of consumer capital formation. – to treat consumption innovations as flowing from accumulated experience and knowledge rather than appearing as an exogenously determined event. Nevertheless, Mintz is surely correct to call attention to the far-reaching ramifications of consumer clusters.'[17]

While I share this last sentiment I believe that the earlier summary of Mintz's analysis needs to be qualified. Not only does the taste for sweetened tea (or coffee) need to be contextualized but the sequence flowing from it nuanced. Tea did not have to be produced by slave or colonial labour and for a considerable time was produced under very different conditions from the colonial slavery of the New World. Furthermore I would also argue that slave plantations were more the consequence than the cause of capitalism. Mintz's vaguer wording is to be preferred to de Vries's crisp summary of consequences.

Let us consider further links and consumer 'packages'. These were wider than Bayly allows. While 'breakfast' nicely captures the compensation offered to some free workers by the industrious revolution, the critical breakthrough to a thorough-going *industrial* revolution came with cotton fabrics, often dyed with indigo. Cotton had played some role in the earlier, pre-industrial phase but it became of critical importance with the introduction of power looms and associated industrial methods, using water or steam power. This innovation first

[17] De Vries, *The Industrious Revolution*, p. 30-3.

appeared in the 1760s but took several decades to perfect. Cotton yarn was easier to adapt to the industrial process than wool or flax, and cotton clothing was easier to wash. Moths love silk or wool but avoid cotton. With its freshness, lightness and smoothness, cotton is nicer to wear next to the skin than wool or flax. Cotton was, as de Vries notes, 'fashion's favourite'. The invention of blue jeans, and of cotton underwear, was just as momentous as the invention of breakfast. (The slaves were issued with homespun cloth and other 'negro clothing' but not, Walter Johnson observes, underwear, increasing the sexual vulnerability of enslaved women and girls.[18])

Cotton found new markets everywhere, in the colonies as well as metropolis, in Africa and Asia as well as Europe. The United States, Brazil and Cuba were important markets for British cottons. Though other slave crops had their importance the ultimate triumph of the slave plantations was the avalanche of raw cotton they produced, burying all rivals - and all scruples. Here we have the clearest evidence of a 'second slavery' and its promotion by industrial capitalism. The wage workers also themselves constituted a market – the more so once they persuaded their employers to pay them in cash not tokens or credit at the company store. Details of this fateful nexus will be given below but consider that in 1802 the US produced 55 million lbs of cotton, in 1820 160 mn lbs, in 1830 331 million lbs, in 1840 814 mn lbs, in 1850 1.001 mn lbs and in 1860 lb 2,241 mn lbs.[19] About three quarter of this cotton was exported to Britain.

Kenneth Pomeranz estimates that the land required to grow all the slave-produce exported by the US to Britain in 1830 would have been somewhere between 25 and 30 million acres, an area greater than Britain's entire arable and

[18] Johnson, *The River of Dark Dreams*, pp. 171, 195.
[19] Alfred Conrad and John Meyer, 'The Economics of Slavery in the Ante-bellum South', in Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman, *The Reinterpretation of American Economic History,* pp. 342-61, p. 358.

pasture land put together.[20] North America was no longer a colony of Britain but British merchants and manufacturers still disposed of its most valuable marketed crop, contributing two thirds of US export earnings.

The slave systems also boosted demand for metal goods, linking up with another dimension of industrialisation. The Atlantic slave trade and the slave plantations it supplied created strong demand for every type of metal manufacture, whether iron bars and firearms for purchasing slaves in Africa, the shackles for use during the 'middle passage', or the hoes and machetes for the slave gangs to wield in the Americas. The galloping demand for metal acted as a forced draught, fanning the flames of industrialisation.

The work regime of the plantation, kept at full pitch by whip and stocks, was a sort of semi-mechanisation, wedded to steam power in processing but relying on unaided human effort in cultivation (on which more below). The plantation and the factory, the trading vessel and the port city, were establishing new reference points for freedom and bondage. Cotton cloth that was the product of slave labour in the Americas, and of child labour in the mines and factories of Northwest Europe, was fashioned into white shirts, blouses and pants that conveyed a sense of the consumer's respectability, freedom and independence.

Thus the toil of the slaves and an incipiently global network of exchanges supplied the core items of a life style that defined civilised consumption. Coffee houses, tea parties, newspapers and advertisements supplied the conveniences and seductions of a way of life that intensified consumers' dependence on distant climes. Whereas black and silver dominated the baroque, this new world of consumption was intensely white, the white of refined sugar or cotton calicoes, or of white-washed stucco and sun-bleached sail. However the hidden and distant world of production rested on black slave gangs,

[20] Keneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe and the Making of the Modern World Economy,* Princeton 2000, p. 276.

darkened and airless holds, cramped coal pits and 'dark satanic mills' (William Blake's poem 'America' shows him to be well aware of New World satanic mills too).

The ominous and oppressive results of accelerating globalization were intermingled with potentially more benign consequences as the new exchanges spread domesticated plants (potatoes, maize, bananas, rice, peanuts) and animals (horses, sheep and cattle) from one part of the world to another. Where they found the right soils and conditions – social as well as natural - these new products reduced the toil needed to reproduce human life. Depending on prevailing social relations this could boost the autonomy of small-holders or intensify landlordism. As we will see the planters actively sought new crop varieties and breeds. The enslaved Africans too brought with them an expertise in cultivation (of rice and of a number of subsistence crops). The social relations of enslavement allowed the slaveowner to benefit from the ingenuity and effort of their slaves' will to survive and skill in cultivation (about which more later).

Globalisation Sows Conflict and Resistance

In 1770 the Abbé Raynal published the first edition of his best-seller *L'Histoire des Deux Mondes*. Its opening words were: 'Nothing in the history of mankind in general, or of Europe in particular, has been as significant as the discovery of the New World and the route to India by way of the Cape of Good Hope. These events marked the beginning of a revolution in the commerce and power of nations, and the way of life, the industry and government of all peoples. It was from this moment on that the inhabitants of the most far-flung lands were brought closer together by new relationships and new needs.' [21]

This perceptive salute marks the 'revolution in commerce' and links it to a new 'way of life', 'new relationships and new needs'. Implicitly old ways of life,

[21] Abbé Raynal, *The History of the Two Worlds*.

previously sheltered from comparison, were to be swept aside. Was slavery in the Americas part of the old world or part of the new?

The *Histoire des Deux Mondes* was utterly contradictory when it came to colonial slavery. The Spanish king was urged to promote slave plantations in his possessions, with tips on how this was to be done and the best management of an enslaved work force. The Spanish and Portuguese authorities were invited to learn from the supposedly more humane regulation of slavery in the French colonies. (A standard trope of imperial myth-making was the claim by each imperial power that its own practice of slavery was well-regulated, benign and an example to others). On the other hand this book, which was the work of several hands, also contained a memorable denunciation of slaveholding, with the warning that such an explosive and hateful practice sowed discord between the powers as statesmen belatedly grasped that sugar or cotton plantations were now more valuable than silver mines. . Readers were warned that reliance on a brutal slave regime would exact a price - the time was not far distant when a new Spartacus would arise at the head of a servile insurrection and avenge the wrongs done to the sons and daughters of Africa.

It is generally reckoned that this passage was written by Denis Diderot, helped perhaps by Jean de Pechmeja. The Enlightenment had a mixed record when it came to addressing colonial slavery but Diderot represented its more radical strand with his recognition of a universal human moral agency. Raynal was prepared to countenance Diderot's anti-slavery flourishes in a context where they undercut the British claim to be the leading Atlantic power. Raynal accepted a secret pension from the French colonial ministry and his vision chimed in with a reform of Bourbon institutions that would propel them to victory over the English. This helps to explain the vein of prophecy in the book which seems to anticipate the American Revolution, the willingness of the

French king to back the rebels, the outbreak of the Haitian revolution and imperial attempts to claim the ‘moral capital’ of anti-slavery.

It was still early days for the ‘revolution in commerce’ when the *Histoire des Deux Mondes* was first published. The great systems of colonial monopoly were all still in place, but widespread contraband and rival projects of ‘reform’ were already loosening the constraints. The plantation trades boosted the wealth and aspirations of the planters and led them to buy more provisions from local, or at least American, farmers and merchants. Incremental doses of ‘free trade’, opened a breach wherever more competition was allowed, and the more dynamic mercantile faction prospered whenever tariffs were lowered and mercantilist privileges removed.

The American rebels challenged the British claim to tax and regulate its colonies. North American merchants, planters and farmers wished to do business with whomever they wished, and to manage their own affairs, demands incompatible with imperial authority. The French royal authorities were so desperate to have their revenge on the British that they were willing to overlook this danger and join forces with the American rebels. Wartime conditions further encouraged contraband while the Spanish and Portuguese authorities believed they had to modernise and relax commercial restrictions.

In this way ‘free trade’ favoured trade with the plantation zone and hence boosted slavery. No less certainly the exchanges with the plantations fostered the migration and reproduction of capital in ways that assisted industrialisation. But ‘free trade’ was also part of an anti-colonial struggle, a struggle against tyranny and imperial privilege. The eighteenth century plantation boom had stimulated a ‘picaresque proletariat’ of artisans and wage labourers, printers and market gardeners, seamen and dockers, migrants and adventurers. These social layers swelled the ranks of the patriots and liberty boys, demanding political

freedom and social equality, an end to censorship, manhood suffrage and access to livelihood.

The Belated Birth of Abolitionism

Colonial slavery first flourished at a time when slavery was an almost unchallenged institution in the civilised centres of power. By contrast the 'second slavery' was defined by the fact that it survived the great wave of anti-slavery – slave revolt and abolitionism – that targeted the slave trade and which destroyed or suppressed slavery in the French and British colonies. The lands of the 'second slavery' were deeply marked by the fate they escaped.

The idea of abolition or universal freedom was a new one. Slavery had withered and even expired in several parts of late medieval Europe but without any general legislation suppressing it and without any philosopher or theologian condemning it. African enslavement had provoked resistance at every step but not in the name of universal liberation. There had been slave revolts, and private challenges to slaveholding, and wars of resistance by the indigenous peoples, from the earliest days of colonization. In the 18th century it was not the famous philosophers of the 'Enlightenment', or preachers of the 'Great Awakening' who led the way but anonymous groups of ordinary colonists like those responsible for the Germantown resolution of 1688 or the Georgia petition of 1739. Likewise the first steps towards the rejection of slavery were 'freedom suites', legal cases taken to claim that particular victims were wrongfully held in slavery. In French as well as English courts such freedom suites might simply contest the details of a given transaction, and this would not challenge the legitimacy of slavery as such. But on a number of occasions – such as the famous Mansfield decision of 1772 freeing Somersett – the case was argued in more fundamental terms, namely that Somersett was free because there was no positive support for enslavement in English law. These freedom suites, whether

in France or Britain, could only be sustained by tenacious and courageous groups of friends, supporters and relations, and they naturally reflected in some way the great quarrels of the time. The Mansfield decision itself may be seen as a metropolitan warning to the turbulent North Americans. Whatever the motive, this was one of scores of such judgments which closed particular jurisdictions to slaveholding, gradually marking off 'free' and 'slave' territory.

Eventually these disparate sources of opposition were succeeded by a fundamental and public critique aiming at radical abolition and universal liberation, dating to the 1760s. The Quaker pioneers Benjamin Lay and Anthony Benezet made the crucial step from private critique to public agitation at this time, having largely won the argument within the Society of Friends. At a time of rising patriotism and hostilities, Quakers found a cause which reinforced and justified their pacifism. The Seven Years War was a hugely destructive and costly orgy of aggrandisement and conquest. It was to provoke an imperial crisis amongst all protagonists. While the British had to cope with too much success, the other powers were licking their wounds and planning for recovery and revenge.

The French and Spanish royal authorities were worried that their colonists were in league with English smugglers, neglectful of the national interest and deaf to royal commands. The planters of Saint Domingue were happy to buy supplies from the English colonists and to sell them molasses and other plantation products in return. For their part the Spanish authorities had been shocked by the welcome accorded to the English invaders when they seized Havana in 1762. Imperial reformers aimed to reorganize trade restrictions, removing the monopolies enjoyed by Seville and Bordeaux but retaining preferences for national carriers. And as a counterweight to the white creoles the French

authorities promoted a coloured militia, a measure that aroused a howl of protest from the colonial whites in the French islands and particularly in Saint Domingue. (The Spanish and Portuguese colonial authorities had already shown, as mentioned above, that, in difficult times, a coloured militia could furnish an additional prop of loyal support.)

The first thorough and radical attack on slavery by a jurist or philosopher was a chapter of George Wallace's *A System of the Principles of the Law of Scotland* in 1760. This uncompromising indictment, with its call for immediate emancipation, appeared as an extract in a much-reprinted compilation on the wrongs of slavery and the slave trade published by Anthony Benezet in 1762. Wallace's call for the immediate freeing of all slaves was also echoed at length in an entry on Atlantic slavery and slave trading in the French *Encyclopédie* (1765). Prior to the appearance of Wallace's chapter the only secular, philosophical critique of racial slavery was a satirical passage in Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois* in 1748. While the latter should be given credit for ridiculing racist defences of slavery it was by no means a systematic rejection of slaveholding. The rise of Atlantic commerce stimulated the self-confidence of those associated with it and created a vibrant 'civil society'. The Seven Years War led to the end of French rule in North America, removing a powerful constraint on the English colonists. The Americans, as they now called themselves, were no longer so dependent on Britain nor so willing to submit to metropolitan claims and regulations. The subsequent controversies over colonial rights and metropolitan prerogatives involved an extraordinary outpouring of thousands of pamphlets, journals, lampoons and newspapers, devoted to such secular topics as taxation, property, representation and the proper scope of freedom. Only a tiny number of these writings mentioned the rights and wrongs of slavery, though the American rebels often lamented *their own* supposed enslavement to the mother country. Nevertheless there was

something odd about slavery and it became a source of controversy. Once this happened the opening lines of the Declaration of Independence lent themselves to challenges to slaveholding.

At the outset of the struggle one of the British commanders, Lord Dunmore the governor of Virginia, offered freedom to slaves willing to dessert rebel owners and enrol in the British forces. Enough responded to allow Dunmore to form an 'Ethiopian regiment'. As the conflict unfolded a number of British commanders welcomed slaves deserting rebel owners, engaging them as servants or support workers. A few thousand free blacks or former slaves fought in the rebel ranks, sometimes serving as substitutes for their owners. However the slave-owners of the plantation zone did not permit the enrolment of black soldiers in Southern military units. At a difficult moment for the rebellion John Laurence, son of the financier Henry Laurence, urged the creation of a black battalion but the South Carolina assembly vetoed the plan. The American rebels adopted a ban on slave imports in its general commercial boycott.

Both sides, with their massive stake in plantations, shied away from any general anti-slavery stance. However the strains of war did provoke an abolitionist response in some quarters. The run up to the Independence war had witnessed class struggles between the richer merchants and proprietors, on the one side, and the mass of poorer and middling citizens, on the other. These clashes diminished respect for property in ways that made emancipation easier to countenance. In 1777 the radical 'Green Mountain men' broke away from New York and set up the new state of Vermont, adopting a constitution which outlawed both slavery and indentured labour. In Philadelphia the radicals, with their attacks on the greed of the 'forestalling' merchants, had influence with the militia and assembly. While poorer citizens starved, the merchants kept their warehouses locked and waited for prices to rise even further. In some cases merchants were believed to have sold grain to the French or even the English.

Gary Nash describes how the setting up of a Committee on Trade to regulate prices and sales created a situation where 'advocates of an unrestricted market economy and supporters of a managed moral economy stared and shouted at one another over a widening chasm'.[22]

In 1780 the assembly of Pennsylvania adopted a moderate emancipation law, which freed the children born to slave mothers once they reached the age of 28. Pennsylvania was a state at war, wracked by social strife, shortages and inflation. The preamble to the emancipation law pointed out that there were few slaves left in the state (many left with the British) and the law itself did not free any of them. This moderate measure was reached after public debate and with serious concessions to the slaveholders (eg the raising of the age of freedom). The freedmen it created would have the same rights as anyone else. The assembly which passed this law was amongst the most radical in Pennsylvania's history but its support for the 'free womb' measure should probably be seen as offering a new basis of collaboration between rich and poor, patriots and pacifists. It was a measure which any North American rebel could take pride in and could be cited as proof that free trade did not have to mean the spread of slavery. It fostered the misleading idea that slavery was on the way out in North America.

While other Northern states eventually adopted measures to phase out slavery, the assemblies of the Southern states, with their massive slave populations, did not even consider free womb laws. In the immediate afterglow of Revolution private manumissions were (for a time) made easier in Virginia and many thousands were freed in recognition of their loyal service. The ban on the slave trade maintained by all states except South Carolina. The leaders of the new republic might be embarrassed by the presence of half a million slaves still in

[22] Gary Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, London 2006, p. 320.

bondage but they nevertheless regarded them as an asset and resource of the greatest importance.

Abolitionism emerged as a mass movement in the defeated metropolis, not amongst the victorious former colonists. Britain's defeat in North America precipitated a profound legitimacy crisis. It challenged the Hanoverian order, with its corrupt and unrepresentative ruling institutions, and its newly assertive middle classes and artisans. After all, the rebels had been fighting for 'English liberties' and their victory had exposed the oligarchy's incompetence, arrogance and venality. Britain's cautious reform movement did not feel strong enough to challenge the oligarchy head-on, especially at a time of wounded national pride. The public campaign against the slave trade which erupted in the years 1787 to 1792 gave the advocates of reform an issue which dramatised the need for change at the heart of the monarchy and empire. Leading figures in the universities, the Anglican Church, the Admiralty, and eventually parliament itself, rallied to the cause, with the Quakers, prodded by young American Friends, playing a crucial organizational role.[23] The Society for the Abolition of the Atlantic Slave trade attracted highly respectable support while organising a nation-wide campaign of petitions and public meetings. The new provincial press rallied to the cause, as did the Nonconformist Protestant denominations, especially the Methodists. The parliamentary champions of slave trade abolition were to include William Pitt, the prime minister and his friend William Wilberforce, both men still in their twenties. Legislation was blocked in the powerful House of Lords but this only encouraged the abolitionists to step up their agitation outside parliament. That something new was afoot was suggested by the founding of an abolitionist society in France, the *Amis des Noirs,* and by the decision of the Danish government to anticipate British action by winding down its own role in the Atlantic traffic.

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[23] Christopher Brown, *Moral Capital*

The British ‘abolitionist’ campaign of 1787-92 was formally limited to ending the Atlantic slave trade but its supporters often claimed or implied that, cut off from new supplies, the slaveholders of the British West Indies would be induced to improve conditions on the plantations and eventually end slavery itself. The North American rebels had adopted slave trade bans as a war measure and rebuke to the British, but without a more general anti-slavery rationale. The slave population of the North American plantation zone already reproduced itself without the need for new imports. The expansive planters of South Carolina still wished for access to new supplies and some Northern merchants were quite prepared to oblige them. But most Virginian planters saw no hardship in a slave trade ban and understood that reopening the traffic would deprive the republic of the moral high ground and expose it to scorn.

The Triumphs of Abolition

The first decade of the 19th century witnessed advances for abolition that have been hailed as the onset of a ‘humanitarian revolution’. Between 1807 and 1825 the governments of all the Atlantic states solemnly denounced the Atlantic slave and many prominent voices were raised against slavery itself. Philosophers and economists lambasted the folly of reliance on slave labour. Abolitionism was embraced by some unlikely recruits to philanthropy. Napoleon issued a decree against the slave trade during his 100 days, the Duke of Wellington and Lord Castlereagh labored hard to promote abolitionist diplomacy, Tsar Alexander declared himself a convert to the cause, and Andrew Jackson, the victor of the Battle of New Orleans, enrolled as a founding member of the American Colonization Society in 1816, a body dedicated to facilitating the manumission and resettlement of slaves. The legitimist monarch of France, Charles X, recognized the republic of Haiti in 1825 but obliged the Haitian government to pay a heavy indemnity to compensate French planters for the loss of their estates. . The Haitians gained greater security and Haitian coffee producers gained access to

the French market. The survival of Haiti as a black state based on the suppression of slavery helped to push William Wilberforce and Simon Bolivar to more radical anti-slavery positions and served as a monumental warning to the slaveholders of the Americas.

Only in retrospect did the historic uprising of the slaves in Saint Domingue in August 1791 carry an abolitionist message. At the time and for years to come fear of the slaves' bloody vengeance overwhelmed any other sentiment and merged with the Anti-Jacobin panic. The Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) must be accounted a foundational event for the 'second slavery' and merits a brief description. The original revolt embraced at least 30,000 rebels in the colony's Northern plain, some of whom escaped to the surrounding hills; there were also outbreaks in other parts of the colony. Divisions between royalists and republicans, between those who defended the 'aristocracy of the skin' and those attacked it, gave the rebels their chance.

The French Jacobins at first strove to suppress the slave rebellion but, having failed to do so, were belatedly persuaded to embrace the cause of black freedom. In February 1794 the National Convention decreed the end of slavery in the French colonies. The black general Toussaint Louverture, who had been fighting for the Spanish king, rallied to the French republic. The 'black Jacobins' successively defeated attempts to restore slavery in Saint Domingue by Spain (1792-5) , Britain (1794-8) and Napoleon's France (1802-3). At the close of this extraordinary saga the new state of Haiti was established in 1804, with a constitution which outlawed slavery and proclaimed Haiti a refuge for any slave, or any indigenous person, seeking freedom. iaHaiti was presented as an ally against Napoleon while the virtual elimination of French colonial produce made it easier for the British parliament to deprive their own West Indian planters of the possibility of buying new slave supplies. The naval victory at Trafalgar in`1805 confirmed Britain's maritime supremacy and ruled out a French invasion but did

nothing to reduce Britain's isolation in Europe. At a difficult moment, with Bonaparte apparently triumphant, and Britain friendless in Europe, and on worsening terms with the United Sates, the British parliament rallied the nation by enacting the Atlantic slave trade ban in 1807, twenty years after the founding of the abolitionist Society. The United States adopted a similar measure in 1808. At the Congress of Vienna in 1815 the European great powers solemnly repudiated the transatlantic slave traffic. Implementation was another matter, as we will see, but the consensus achieved by the 'international community', was superficially impressive.

These dramatic gains for abolitionism were a worry for even the most hard-boiled slaveholders and merchants. Yet they were also aware of the huge opportunities opened up by the collapse of plantation agriculture in Saint Domingue, the largest colonial producer of sugar, coffee and cotton in 1790. Prices shot through the roof in the next decade or so. The challenge for the most advantageously situated of the large slave-owners of the New World was to avoid the fate of the French slave-owners and to satisfy the pent-up demand for plantation produce in Europe and North America. It turned out that the US South, Cuba and Brazil were best placed for , and most capable of, reinventing New World slavery in a largely post-mercantilist and post-colonial era. But this required defiance of the anti-slavery consensus and taking issue with the central place of abolitionism in the 'humanitarian revolution'. The ideological obstacles to a 'second slavery' did not have to be tackled all at once. Colonialism and mercantilism could be evaded and dismantled piecemeal as individual merchants and planters responded to new opportunities. But eventually vast new tracts of land needed to be made safe for slaveholding. The 'second slavery' had to become a slaveholding wedge securely inscribed within the wider Atlantic capitalism. This required new constructions of race and civilization and a primitive accumulation of the social power needed to prevail.The fragility of the slave order required sharp attention to the scope of

sovereignty and the rise of anti-slavery threatened the slaveholders' honour as well as their pocket book.

Planters were very powerful and prominent in the lands of the 'second slavery' but they needed social allies and political connections, both within the slave zone and outside it. The Constitution of the United States, the colonial government of Cuba and the Empire of Brazil integrated the slave regimes into a larger structure of representation and power. In each case power was fractured so that the colony of Cuba was subject to special laws, and that the states of Brazil and the US South had a significant, if never fully established or specified, margin of autonomy and sphere of 'states rights'.