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The Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies series is a well-established collection of over 100 volumes focussing on empires in world history and on the societies and cultures that emerged from, and challenged, colonial rule. The collection includes transnational, comparative and connective studies, as well as works addressing the ways in which particular regions or nations interact with global forces. In its formative years, the series focused on the British Empire and Commonwealth, but there is now no imperial system, period of human history or part of the world that lies outside of its compass. While we particularly welcome the first monographs of young researchers, we also seek major studies by more senior scholars, and welcome collections of essays with a strong thematic focus that help to set new research agendas. As well as history, the series includes work on politics, economics, culture, archaeology, literature, science, art, medicine, and war. Our aim is to collect the most exciting new scholarship on world history and to make this available to a broad scholarly readership in a timely manner.
It is a pleasure and an honour to welcome you to this volume. I can promise your labour in reading will be rewarded as creative connections emerge from the book’s plethora of case studies, analytic suggestions and conceptual discussions that will surely lead to further valuable questions. You are about to step into a collection of state-of-art research that takes the plantation as an analytic tool with which to confront the present, address the legacies of the past, and think about the future, while bringing together what anthropology, history, science and technology studies and other disciplines can do to outline the transient equations with which we attempt to frame, understand, and act upon our collective endeavours.

This is a book about the plantation-institution, about the plantation as a machine of production and devastation, the plantation as a device that generates inequalities and invents hierarchies, the plantation that persists in embodied memories and post-memories of violence for some and of entitlement for others. It is about the plantation and its afterlives of dispossession, exclusion, containment, and detention, of racialized existences, exhausted environments, improbable re-assemblages of species, and combinations of capital and labour that are increasingly about fictional capital and non-human labour. This is a book that lengthens the compact temporality of a symposium intersecting past and future—a symposium that emerged from the creative interactions between Colette Le Petitcorps, Marta Macedo, and Irene Peano while team members of the The Colour of Labour project, plus the enthusiastic respondents to
the call for contributions—and a volume that will bind them through the afterlives of that original temporality.

_The Colour of Labour: The Racialized Lives of Migrants_ was a daring concept that I thought might fit the “high-risk high-gain” profile of the European Research Council grant programme. I was fortunate enough to be awarded an advanced grant (ERC AdG 695573), one that enabled me to gather a team of talented young scholars interested in analysing the ways in which plantation and plantation-like economies and societies produce racialized lives in different ethnographic and historic contexts, with a focus on post-abolition contexts. The aim was to examine how the plantation as a race-making machine persisted beyond its quintessential American-Caribbean format, with its centuries of de-humanizing enslaved and trafficked Africans, in which blackness and whiteness were generated first as positional categories and later ascribed properties of nature. What other classifications and racialized hierarchies came with new arrangements in plantation labour? How did new systems of classification coexist with the established ones? We looked beyond the Atlantic trade, to the Indian and Pacific oceans, to the forced, semi-forced, and contracted routes of labour traffic and the related dynamics of diversifying and hierarchizing the labour force—whether in Hawaii, the Guianas, Mauritius, or São Tomé or in contemporary agribusiness in Europe.

In the process, we went beyond the original questions and raised new ones. With the privilege of a slow-science framework that counteracted, even if only for a while, the current trend of squeezing research outputs into a predefined spreadsheet, we were able to not only engage in actual empirical and conceptual research but also to cross-fertilize lines of research in enduring ways. It was in this environment of academic freedom that the editors of this volume called for an open-ended symposium exploring plantations and their afterlives along the lines of materialities, durabilities, and struggles. Despite the misfortunes of the year 2020, the pandemic-related postponements and the cyberization of academic meetings, it was a most accomplished venture, as this volume ably demonstrates.

In their introduction, the editors Le Petitcorps, Macedo, and Peano guide you through a comprehensive discussion of the critical literature on plantations, raise the relevant questions, and present the clusters of problems and theory that structure the volume, while also dissecting the different contributions and bringing them into dialogue with one another.
They will guide you along the axes of sovereignties, ecologies, and afterlives and into the geopolitical clusters that form the sections of the book. In the end, Deborah Thomas leaves us with the perfect coda, one that at once settles the matter and makes us want to start all over again, go back to the subject, expand the clusters and themes with a new refraction and its new kaleidoscopic combinations: modernities, mobilities, and mutualities.

Cristiana Bastos

Cristiana Bastos is a research professor of Anthropology at the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, Portugal. She is currently leading the project “The Colour of Labour”, awarded with an Advanced Grant by the European Research Council.
Acknowledgments

The volume springs from a symposium titled “Plantations and their after-lives: Materialities, durabilities, struggles” organized by the editors and held virtually in September 2020, but hosted by the Institute of Social Sciences at the University of Lisbon. Participants addressed plantations from multiple angles (labour, race, technologies, environments, subjectivities, resistance, ruination, memory) across different geographies and chronologies, ranging from the seventeenth century to the present. In this volume, we gathered a selection of the papers presented at the conference, together with others, revisiting some well-established themes on plantations pasts and presents under a new light. We are grateful to all the conference presenters, commentators, and audience who joined our conversation and, in many cases, kept it going well past the event. We also wish to thank Cristiana Bastos and Deborah A. Thomas for their deep engagement with this project and for their contributions to this volume.

The symposium, and the editors’ work, was supported by the European Research Council-funded project “The Colour of Labour: The Racialized Lives of Migrants” (Advanced Grant n. 695573, PI Cristiana Bastos). We thank our colleagues in the project research team for the lively discussions and especially Mari Lo Bosco, Project Manager, who provided invaluable help during the entire process.
We also want to thank the anonymous reviewers for commentaries and suggestions on earlier versions of the manuscript. Finally, we owe our appreciation to Palgrave Macmillan, and particularly to Richard Drayton, together with the other editors of the “Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies” series, who welcomed our proposal since its early stages and supported us all the way, making this book possible.
Praise for *Global Plantations in the Modern World*

“The plantation is a distinctive global institution, vital to the making of the modern world. It is hugely creative in its wealth-making potential and massively destructive in what it does to the environment and to plantation workers. This highly stimulating and provocative set of essays help us redefine and rethink what the plantation means, offering great insights into slavery and emancipation.”

—Trevor G. Burnard, *Professor and Director of the Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation, University of Hull, UK*

“A rare and relevant rethinking of plantations and their afterlives, this book powerfully intervenes in some of the most important debates of our time. The authors and editors brilliantly weave together ethnographic, archival and archaeological case studies that layer into productive critiques of colonialisms, racisms, environmental destructions, and im/mobilities. Through prisms of plantations and counterplantations and the unexpected human and more-than-human actors buttressing and resisting them, the book provides unanticipated insights into the Anthropocene, slavery, racial capitalism, industrial agriculture, migrant labour and – most importantly – possibilities for alternative futures.”

—Seth M. Holmes, *Chancellor’s Professor, UC Berkeley, USA*
“The common elements of plantations are the linear arrangement of monocrops and the deployment of labour on a massive scale. The other elements – racial, political, embodied, affective – are specific to their historical and geographic milieu. By placing diverse plantation worlds in conversation, the authors expose the worlds that made plantations, and the worlds plantations made and continue to make through their multivalent entanglements. The results are revelatory.”

—Tania Murray Li, University of Toronto, Canada
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Viewing Plantations at the Intersection of Political Ecologies and Multiple Space-Times

Irene Peano, Marta Macedo, and Colette Le Petitcorps

As monocultural complexes aimed at the intensive production of cash crops for the global market, plantations have played an indisputably central and persistent role in shaping the economic, socio-political, cultural and ecological setup of the modern world. Their foundational
character is reflected in (if by no means exhausted by) the plethora of discourses that have invested plantations’ workings since the inception of European economic and sovereign expansion across continents. These have addressed a vast range of themes and processes—from land appropriation to production, processing and trade, through labor recruitment and management for profit extraction, taxation and regulation, political conflict and morality, sovereign rule and instruments of control and subversion, and many more—adopting multiple positions and perspectives, with disparate aims. Among such discourses, as far as scholarly engagements are concerned, over the course of the last century (and earlier), a significant number of important critical works have been produced, which it is impossible to summarize in this introduction. However, a few core bodies of literature can be identified, that have shaped our own approach in conceiving of this edited volume.

In broad strokes, we build upon conceptualizations of plantations as race-making institutions, from the publication of pioneering works such as Edgar Thompson’s (1932, 1939, 1975), W.E.B. DuBois’ (1899, 1911, 1935) and C.L.R. James’ (1980 [1966]) onwards, also and especially in relation to political-economic frameworks, that have contextualized the role of plantations in the development of capitalism (Braudel 1992; Williams 1944), the world-system (e.g. Mintz 1960, 1968, 1985; Rubin 1959; Tomich 2004; Wolf 1982; Wallerstein 1974), colonial and post-colonial dependency and underdevelopment (Beckford 1999 [1972]; Best 1968; Rodney 1981; Smith 1967). At the same time, we are attentive to the imbrication of racism in unequal class relations investing also the spheres of gender, sexuality and intimacy (e.g. Casid 2004; Chatterjee 2001; Fox-Genovese 1988; Morgan 2004; Stolcke 1988; Stoler 1985a) and to the role of migration and its governance, its differential exclusions and segregations (e.g. Bastos 2018, 2020; Behal 2012; Moulier-Boutang 2016; Northrup 1995), in relation to the organization of plantations as productive apparatuses. Overall, such approaches have contributed to outline the role of plantations as crucial foci for both the expansion of imperial and post-imperial projects and for opposition to them—from the first slave revolts and flights to contemporary peasant, worker and community struggles.

Drawing on such established fields of critical inquiry, in recent years scholars’ attention is increasingly turning to plantations’ ecological dimensions, on the one hand, and on the other, to the long-term
material, affective, and symbolic imprints they have left on the environments that they contributed so heavily to mold—even after seemingly epochal transformations and in some cases plantations’ very demise. These stand out as particularly innovative axes of research, promising to shed light on current predicaments also by querying time-honored historical truths, their making and unmaking. In dialogue with recent scholarship on post-plantation politics and its affective archives (Thomas 2019; cf. her Afterword in this volume), on the afterlives of multiple plantation pasts (Adams 2007; Hartman 2007; McInnis 2016; McKittrick 2011, 2013; Sharpe 2016), and on eco-materialist perspectives (Allevaert 2013; Haraway 2015; Haraway et al. 2016; Haraway and Tsing 2019; Tsing 2015; Li and Semedi 2021), we seek to further articulate a nexus between plantations’ more-than-human dimensions and their all-too-human (modern, imperial) dynamics of control, extraction and subversion, all the while exploring their “durabilities” (Stoler 2016). In this sense, our approach builds on reflections recently put forth by other scholars on the need to “methodologically, conceptually, and politically placing political violence and non-human entities side by side” (Navaro et al. 2021: 2), and being attuned to what Navaro and her co-authors call “reverberations” —“the lingering effects (and affects) of violence […] including its echo, cyclical recurrence, and sporadic reoccurrence in different guises, shapes, and dimensions” (Ibid.: 10).

It is in this vein that we have identified this volume’s three main axes to analyze plantations and their workings as those of ecologies, afterlives and sovereignties. While, as mentioned, both eco-materialist approaches and analyses of plantations’ durabilities, hauntings and ruinations have been developed by recent scholarly works, the third theme—that of sovereignty—is perhaps the least explored in relation to plantations, despite some promising, early engagements with such nexus (cf. Thompson 1932). If currently the political philosophy underlying Westphalian, modern sovereignty is being questioned not only by reference to a present in which the nation-state appears to be giving way to new, complex and multilayered formations of power, but also by problematizing the very foundations of the modern state, no critical work has approached the theme specifically in relation to plantations. And this notwithstanding the acknowledgment, by such scholarship, of the role private (mercantilist, capitalist and industrial) enterprise played at the height of modernity in pre-figuring and effecting imperial and colonial forms of sovereignty across continents. What better context than that of
plantations, among the first (together with mining) extractive projects associated with European expansion across the globe, to analyze the imbrications of political and economic power away from reified, monolithic and preempted conceptions of the modern state? Furthermore, while important work has been produced on the first two themes, very few scholars have addressed the intersections between one and the other, let alone of those two with the theme of sovereignty.

In the following sections, we engage with all authors’ contributions to explore such topics through a transdisciplinary and global approach. The broad range of case studies collected here analyzes the techniques that have allowed plantations to function on multiple levels, spanning across spatiotemporal frames from a number of disciplinary perspectives. On the one hand, the very proliferation of plantations across chronologies, geographies and specific political contexts precludes universal categorizations, calling into question any monolithic notion of “the” plantation. On the other hand, common features accrue to the different processes examined in the present book. All chapters speak to the emergence and transformation of modern sovereignties, productivist labor regimes, their attendant subjectivities and environmental dimensions, defining and nuancing the contours of plantations as institutions whose internal relations have pervaded whole societies, spilling over the bounds of individual estates. These case studies thus also broaden the scope beyond the sole instance of agricultural/agro-industrial production, by including the sites and types of labor that have developed in the evolution and restructuring of plantation economies, such as those pertaining to tourism, heritage, or domestic service. At the same time, the excesses, contradictions, resistances and ruinations of mechanisms of extraction and (and by means of) control are made apparent. Through the heterogeneity of plantations, we also consider mutations, failures and deviations, providing an insight into the afterlives, specters and remnants of these systems of production, extraction and authority, also in their subjective and affective dimensions.

The book is organized into four geographical sections—the Caribbean, the Americas, West Africa and its diasporas and finally South and South-East Asia—that highlight the planetary dimension of the plantation system and its expansion through differently paced and timed political-economic and ecological projects, across the modern and post-modern period. Such breadth allows to expand the focus beyond analyses of plantations that very often have dealt with individual empires through human-centered lenses, and with the singular geographies of the slave trade or of indentured labor. This also grants for an in-depth, granular exploration of plantation ecologies, subjectivities and afterlives on the
INTRODUCTION: VIEWING PLANTATIONS

The choice of this broad chronology and planetary outlook on plantations provides for an accurate assessment of how local specificities are enmeshed in transnational and trans-imperial movements, resulting from “frictions” (Tsing 2004) with global processes.

Plantation Ecologies: Environmental Degradation, Segregated Human Relations and Racial Injustice

Plantations were shaped as much by political, economic and social dynamics as by specific ecological assemblages. While sustaining and promoting imperialist projects, capitalist ventures, racialized labor regimes and anti-colonial resistances, plantations were, on a very physical level, agro-ecological systems that altered and were altered by biological processes. As such, several contributors in this volume start from the acknowledgment that plantation environments cannot be seen as mere background scenarios to human action but must be reckoned with as acting forces in their own right (see Bulamah; Moore; Stubbs; Davis; and Chao). Building upon a robust and decades-old literature attentive to environmental transformations, the centrality of individual plant species for plantations’ very existence, as well as the importance of soil, air, water, fungi, insects and other animals in all their multiple interactions is considered for its role in configuring the contingent socio-ecological relations established inside and beyond plantations, past and present (Dean 1995; Fiege 2012, Ch. 3; Grove 1997; MacLennan 2014; McCook 2019; Soluri 2006; Uekötter 2014). Thus, plantations are perfect laboratories to bring together environmental and labor dimensions, as explored by inspiring early works in cultural ecology (Steward et al. 1956). Many chapters in this book make it clear that what happened “on the ground” was co-producing modern plantations’ social hierarchies and power relations (cf. Bray et al. 2019; Brown and Lubock 2014; Rogers 2010; Stewart 1996; White 1996). As the breadth of collected case studies testifies, the effects of the plantation mode of agricultural production run deep in our present and are global in scope. While many regions bear the imprint of historical plantation experiences, contemporary plantations, that span across the planet, keep reproducing and feeding on imperial matrices of ecological disruption and racial inequality.
Such processes, legacies and durabilities also put the volume’s case studies in dialogue with recent discussions on the notion of the Anthropocene. The term, which signals the emergence of a new geological era resulting from human activities, has gained currency in the social sciences, but the undifferentiated notion of the “Anthropos” on which it is founded also spurred criticisms for its erasure of racialized and gendered power dynamics, violence and exclusion (Yusoff 2019) and led to the emergence of a plethora of alternative concepts politicizing this new epochal shift (Bonneuil and Fressoz 2016). In fact, political ecology scholars have long argued that human activity is embedded within larger ecosystems that have had an impact on global processes of wealth accumulation, concentration and inequality, and asymmetrically distributed environmental degradation (Escobar 1999; Hornborg 2007; Robbins 2012; Ross 2017), proposing the concept of Capitalocene to merge world-system theory with earth-system science (Moore 2015, 2016).

Intervening in such geo-historical debates, the identification of our era as Plantationocene (Carney 2021; Haraway 2015; Haraway and Tsing 2019; Haraway et al. 2016; Murphy and Schroering 2020) further shifts the focus, foregrounding the importance of monocultural agro-industrial systems (Besky 2020) for our understanding of ecological devastation and the perpetuation of colonial and imperialist relations, in particular through racialized and coerced labor. Rather than feeding into discussions about a definite periodization of geological epochs, we are interested in how the empirically grounded studies that compose this collection speak to the analytical potential of the Plantationocene. Our goal is to examine the multiple socio-ecological interactions within which plantations are enmeshed, and identify their effects. The fine-grained approaches from post-humanist and critical race perspectives developed in this book bring to the fore the violence against humans and non-humans, the unequal power relations intrinsic to the plantation system and the possibilities for its subversion, allowing us to imagine more elaborate ways of narrating plantation regimes, and to move beyond overly simplistic binaries between exploitation and resistance.

The recurrent uprooting, selection and transplanting of different life-forms from specific ecologies was foundational to modern plantation projects (Dusinberre and Iijima 2019; Haraway et al. 2016; Tsing 2015). In the process of putting cultivators and cultivars to work, the planters and managers who engineered the ordering and disciplining of these “naturecultural” worlds also sustained specific beliefs about
the superiority of plantation-style production and, attached to that, about “nature’s” ideal keepers. Plantation-making was instrumental in the development of racialized discourses about local populations that did not conform to specific notions of productivity and profitability, with important political consequences: supposedly “lazy” agriculturalists, employing “backward” agricultural methods, should not be granted access to land (Li 2014), just as pastoralists and hunter-gatherers. Thus, plantation-making almost always involved the exclusion of local peoples, the destruction of their livelihoods, the denigration of their intimate and embodied knowledges, and ultimately the ruination of the very ecologies that nurtured those communities.

If making plantations demanded plans, ideal schemes, prototypes to be built based on technical expertise and hierarchical control, many case studies confirm that plantations seldom functioned according to these predefined designs. If laborers—whether enslaved, indentured or waged, in various combinations—never fully conformed to planters’ disciplinary prescriptions (and in fact it was insubordination or its threat that made the constant elaboration and refining of such prescriptions necessary in the first place), local environmental conditions also challenged scientific, “rational” projects. Furthermore, when the imagined plantation was physically realized, unforeseen consequences may ensue. Plantations have always been vulnerable to forces generated from within as much as from without, and disturbances happened far more often than acknowledged (Tsing 2004).

In fact, the standardization, simplification and scaling-up processes that characterize these agricultural systems, seeking to convert plants into marketable crops and humans into labor power, occlude the transformative capacities of the other life-forms that obstinately continue to exist within plantations. Not denying the ways in which plantations have caused biodiversity loss, Chao’s contribution in this volume points to the necessity of complicating our understanding of plantations’ metabolisms, acknowledging the role of non-humans in countering extractive aims that stretch across unprecedented scales. This case study eloquently illustrates how monocrop regimes, while contributing to eliminate some organisms, created possibilities for the proliferation of others. Bringing to the fore fungi feasting on palm trees, fungi that established symbiotic relations with those trees, and salvific plants turned into invasives, together with the perspectives of indigenous communities working for/fighting against