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978-0-521-11525-4 - The Price of Emancipation: Slave-Ownership, Compensation and British Society at the End of Slavery

Nicholas Draper

Excerpt

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## Introduction

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In his autobiography, H. M. Hyndman, the founder of the Social Democratic Federation, Britain's first Marxist party, wrote that his father, John Beckles Hyndman

was an Eton and Trinity Cambridge man, at which college, being then possessed of a very large income, he was a Fellow-commoner ... After taking his degree and having eaten his dinners at the Inner Temple, he was duly qualified to exercise the legal profession, and was called to the Bar. So far as I know, he never had or tried to obtain a brief, but none the less he was entitled to call himself Barrister-at-law, and remained a member of that highly respectable and rigid Trade Union until the day of his death.<sup>1</sup>

One generation back from this caricature of a particular type of English gentleman, however, the lineage changed. H. M. Hyndman came, he said, 'like most well-to-do people of the upper middle class in this island, from decent piratical stock'. His grandfather, who at one period had been 'compelled to play the violin in public houses', became a planter and slave-owner in Demerara (part of what became British Guiana), and had prospered both from extraordinary profits in speculative purchases of estates from alarmed Dutch resident planters at the time of cession of Demerara to Britain, and from 'the ordinary profits of his plantations being steadily forthcoming on a large scale from the beneficial toil of his well-nourished negroes'. 'And here I may add', Hyndman continued,

that, bad as chattel slavery is from every point of view, the big plantations were not by any means bad places for the Negroes in the time of my grand-father. They enjoyed a good standard of life, they were fairly educated, and they were not allowed by law to work more than 45 hours a week. If I had my choice of being a negro slave on a well-kept estate in the West Indies, or a sweated free white wage-earner in one of our great cities for the whole of my life, I know very well which I should prefer.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. M. Hyndman, *The record of an adventurous life* (London: Macmillan, 1911), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2–6.

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Hyndman himself, born in 1842 after Emancipation, sold off the last of his family's plantations as his father's administrator. His family story of the expropriation, transformation and consumption of wealth derived from the enslaved; his rhetorical distancing devices; his ignorance of the nature of plantation slavery; and his contention that colonial enslavement was preferable to wage-labour in Britain; all indeed appear to condense the experience of a broader swathe of British 'well-to-do people of the upper middle class' at the time of Emancipation, more fully than perhaps he intended. His one material omission is the fact that his father John Beckles Hyndman received over £40,000 as compensation for the loss of his 'property' in the 791 enslaved people on his two plantations, out of the total of £20 million compensation that the British government granted to the owners of the enslaved upon Emancipation.<sup>3</sup>

But how truly representative were the Hyndmans, or indeed any of the more famous individual British slave-owners of the 1820s and 1830s, such as John Gladstone – William's father – whom Eric Williams used as such a powerful symbol in *Capitalism and slavery*?<sup>4</sup> Against the background of an historiography generally characterised only by anecdotal examples of British slave-owning, this study aims, in drawing on the records of the Slave Compensation Commission, which between 1834 and 1845 administered the distribution of the compensation paid to British colonial slave-owners, to map more systematically the recipients of this compensation money in metropolitan Britain by geography, class and gender, and to explore their identities and places in British society. In particular, it seeks to answer five questions: how widespread was slave-owning in metropolitan Britain at the end of British colonial slavery; who were these slave-owners and how did they come to own slaves; how did they represent themselves and how were they represented in a society increasingly hostile to slavery; how did these slave-owners secure compensation from the British state in the form and amount they did; and how does the existence of this body of slave-owners fit with established narratives of the end of British colonial slavery?

It has previously been largely assumed that slave-ownership was a marginal activity in Britain by the 1830s; that there was a well-developed

<sup>3</sup> National Archives, Kew: HM Treasury papers, Office of Registry of Colonial Slaves and Slave Compensation Commission Records, T71/885, British Guiana Nos. 626 and 627 for 464 slaves on Houstoun plantation (for which John Beckles Hyndman was awarded £24,157 6s 1d) and 327 slaves on Rome plantation (£17,386 9s 10d). All payments in this study are shown before interest, which accrued from 1 August 1834 on all awards.

<sup>4</sup> E. E. Williams, *Capitalism and slavery* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1964), pp. 89–90.

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mercantile system of consignment and credit that bled off the remaining profits of a fragile plantation economy for the benefit of a handful of metropolitan merchants concentrated in London, Liverpool and Bristol; and that the conflict over slavery in Britain was played out between the abolitionists, backed by extraordinary public support, and a small number of spokesmen for the West India Committee, a narrow sectional interest fighting in a lost cause.<sup>5</sup> This study argues instead that, in addition to the mercantile interest, large-scale slave-ownership or financial exposure to slavery permeated sections of the Anglican rural gentry class, while small-scale slave-holding was common in a number of urban centres of polite society.

Slavery was not physically present in Britain as it was in the southern USA, Cuba or Brazil, and of course the *distance* from the reality of the experience of oppression played a central part in the representation and self-representation of slave-owners in Britain, by their opponents and themselves. But the abolition of the slave-trade in 1807 did not end Britain's intimate relationship with slavery. Slave-ownership had been converted into financial property and conveyed between generations and sexes by the full range of available techniques of management and control governing other types of property. '[T]he grand object of every West India planter', wrote the London merchant and slave-owner John Robley in 1808, was ultimately to 'place the income derived from property in the West Indies, upon a permanent security at all resembling a revenue derived from a landed estate in Europe'.<sup>6</sup> Slave-ownership within Britain was passed directly by inheritance and by marriage settlement, and indirectly by annuities and legacies, underlining the way in which 'slave-property' had been subsumed into the wider world of landed property norms. Nor was this process of transmission confined to the enslaved attached to large colonial estates: smaller groups of

<sup>5</sup> For an early and influential statement of this position, see L. Ragatz, 'Absentee landlordism in the British Caribbean 1750–1833', *Agricultural History*, 5 (1931), 7–24 (p. 12): 'the overwhelming majority [of absentee owners], knowing nothing of plantation-economy and finding themselves hopelessly involved, transferred their hypothecated properties to their creditors, and cut loose entirely from the colonies' after the Napoleonic Wars.

<sup>6</sup> J. Robley, *A permanent and effectual remedy suggested to the evils under which the British West Indies now labour, in a letter from a West India merchant to a West India planter* (London, 1808), p. 4. Robley subsequently moved to Tobago, where he had several children with a 'free mulatto', Eliza M'Kenzie, leaving his wife and children in England (*The Times*, 11 July 1839, p. 7). See also S. D. Smith, *Slavery, family, and gentry capitalism in the British Atlantic: the world of the Lascelles, 1648–1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 342–4. Robley's family in Britain, and the family of his former London partner Charles Brooke, were awarded almost £11,500 for 580 enslaved in Tobago: T71/891, Tobago Nos. 3, 51, 52, 64.

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enslaved in the British Caribbean, usually rented out for service work in colonial towns, were routinely bequeathed across generations of absentee owners in Britain.<sup>7</sup>

As a result, after 1807 slavery appears increasingly to have pervaded particular strata and localities of Britain by virtue of direct slave-ownership or indirect financial dependence on the slave-economy.<sup>8</sup> As slave-owning became more widespread, it became ‘thinner’ and less constitutive of a single identity. It also lost some of its taint as it was transformed into financial assets, into annuities, marriage settlements and legacies. The payment of compensation was central to the final dismantling of the slave system, and when that compensation was offered to slave-owners in the 1830s there was, in effect, a feeding frenzy amongst sections of the British elites over the compensation money, a frenzy that drew thousands of Britons into asserting their ownership of the enslaved once the state attached specific and immediate monetary value to the claims of ownership.

The archive of the Slave Compensation Commission (‘the Commission’) in which this frenzy can be traced represents an extraordinary resource that has barely been touched by historians. In 1838 the Commission published a Parliamentary Return at the request of Daniel O’Connell listing all the awards made to slave-owners by that date, by which time some 93 per cent of the compensation had been settled.<sup>9</sup> Organised by the colony (and within Jamaica by the parish) in which the enslaved had been registered in the most recent triennial slave-registration, the Return lists over 40,000 awards detailing the unique claim number, the name (although not the address) of the awardee, the number of slaves owned and the amount of compensation awarded.

The Parliamentary Return has been mined selectively by historians for anecdotal material but, as has often been recognised, the summary

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 6, below.

<sup>8</sup> There is no earlier ‘census’ of British colonial slave-ownership equivalent to the Slave Compensation Commission records, and therefore no systematic proof of the wider dispersion of financial exposure to slave-ownership is available. However, intrinsic to the ‘modified primogeniture’ that largely governed the transmission of slave-ownership – in which financial claims in the forms of legacies and mortgages (although not by definition annuities for a single life) by dependents other than the primary heir (or heiress) accreted over generations – was an increasing cascade of individuals involved with slavery. The theoretical case is supported by the anecdotal evidence of the Commission records, in which many claims on estates were shared by multiple individuals in Britain. See Chapter 5, below.

<sup>9</sup> *Slavery Abolition Act: an account of all sums of money awarded by the Commissioners of Slavery Compensation*, PP 1837–8, Vol. 48 (215), referred to hereafter as the ‘Parliamentary Return’ or the ‘Return’, which lists awards totalling £18,669,401 10s 7d (p. 334).

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lists of names in the Return are an inadequate basis for determining the true beneficiaries of slave-compensation. Reliance on the Return, for example, has actively misled the Synod of the Church of England, which was told in February 2006 that Henry Phillpotts, the Bishop of Exeter, had been a slave-owner along with his 'business associates'.<sup>10</sup> In fact, as the underlying records of the Commission clearly show, Phillpotts and his fellow-claimants were trustees and executors under the will of the Earl of Dudley, and while such a role could give very substantial control over and access to funds held under trust, the bald identification of Phillpotts as slave-owner and beneficiary of compensation is not tenable. Again, Richard Sheridan was puzzled to find no sign of the heir of Sir William Young, the Governor of Tobago and owner of five estates in the West Indies, in the Parliamentary Return: the underlying records show the unsuccessful pursuit of compensation by Sir William Young's grandson, who lost it to mortgagees and others with prior claims on the Young estates.<sup>11</sup> The records as a whole thus provide significantly more detail and depth for many of the claims, allowing a more reliable analysis of the identity of the slave-owners, and the construction of a prosopography of the major recipients of compensation.<sup>12</sup>

Emancipation and compensation extended not only to the Caribbean but also to the Cape of Good Hope and Mauritius. Together, these

<sup>10</sup> Rev. Simon Bessant to General Synod of the Church of England; see 'Church apologises for slave trade', <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4694896.stm>, 8 February 2006. The same claim was repeated in the House of Commons by Chris Bryant, MP for Rhondda: 'The Bishop of Exeter kept 655 slaves until the time of Abolition of Slavery Act 1833 and he received £12,700 in compensation', *Hansard*, 6 March 2006, Col. 600:21. See T71/915, p. 58; T71/859, Clarendon Nos. 284 and 320; and T71/858, Vere No. 70 for the erroneous filing of the claims for 'the heirs of the Earl of Dudley'. See T71/962 for a letter of 14 September 1835 to the Commission from the London solicitors Alban and Benbow that points out the error, asks for the compensation to be awarded instead in the names of Phillpotts *et al.* as trustees and executors, and includes a summary of part of the Earl of Dudley's will; PROB 11/121 for the Earl of Dudley's will itself, proved London 17 September 1833; and *The Times*, 11 March 1845, p. 6 for the closing of accounts by the trustees and the entry of the late Earl's heir, Lord Ward, into his inheritance.

<sup>11</sup> R. B. Sheridan, 'Sir William Young (1749–1815): planter and politician, with special reference to slavery in the British West Indies', *Journal of Caribbean History*, 33.1–2 (1999), 1–26; Sheridan was aware of a claim from Young's family that was disputed after the publication of the Return, p. 21. For the correspondence of Sir William Laurence Young of North Dean, High Wycombe with the Commission, see T71/1592, pp. 263–4 (Commission to Sir William Laurence Young MP); T71/1592, pp. 272–3 (Commission to John Ramsey (Young's agent)); T71/1602, 2 October 1835 and T71/1610, 28 September 1835 (Young to the Commission). The claims he pursued included T71/877, Antigua No. 282; T71/891; Tobago No. 64; T71/880; Grenada No. 691; and T71/892, St Vincent Nos. 559, 577.

<sup>12</sup> For a more detailed discussion of some of the limitations and issues of the underlying records as a source, see Chapter 4, below.

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two colonies received £3.35 million of the total compensation of £20 million.<sup>13</sup> However, the demographics of the slave-owners of these two important arenas both differed from the predominantly anglophone and anglo-centric owners of the Caribbean. The Cape of Good Hope was characterised by many small slave-owners, generally of Dutch-Boer extraction; Mauritius remained a francophone plantocracy. This is not to say that there were no linkages between these slave economies and metropolitan Britain: it was axiomatic at the time of Emancipation, and remains so in much of the subsequent literature, that Mauritius in particular had rapidly become dependent on British mercantile credit.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, because of the different cultural and national backgrounds of the slave-owners, this study, focused as it is on the British metropolitan slave-owners, does not seek to analyse these two non-Caribbean colonies.<sup>15</sup>

Much of the energy and most of the excitement of the recent literature of late colonial slavery has been devoted – appropriately – towards retrieving, documenting and seeking to understand the experience of the *enslaved*. In focusing instead on the metropolitan slave-owners, this study aims to bring into view the identities, actions, rhetoric and behaviours that slavery as an economic system entailed for elite groups of overwhelmingly (but not exclusively) white men and women in Britain, without implying in any way a privileging of these histories over those of the men and women impacted so directly, brutally and continuously

<sup>13</sup> National Debt Office: Abolition of Slavery Act 1833, Registers of compensation paid to slave owners, NDO4/26 Awards actually paid. The Cape received £1,241,355 16s 9d, and Mauritius £2,110,950 0s 4d.

<sup>14</sup> See for example A. J. Barker, *Slavery and antislavery in Mauritius 1810–1833: the conflict between economic expansion and humanitarian reform under British rule* (London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 5: ‘With most Mauritius estates mortgaged to British creditors and with nearly all sugar exports from the island, largely as a consequence of loan conditions, flowing into the London market, the colony’s economic dependence on Britain [by 1833] was almost complete’; and P. Burroughs, ‘The Mauritian Rebellion of 1832 and the abolition of British colonial slavery’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 4.3 (May 1976), 244–65 (pp. 245–6): ‘British merchants and creditors ... by 1832 apparently held mortgages on all but one of the island’s sugar plantations.’

<sup>15</sup> In addition, Bermuda and the Bahamas, accounting for £178,000 in compensation, have been omitted from the quantitative analysis: neither had significant concentrations of slave-ownership or material levels of absentee ownership: National Debt Office: Abolition of Slavery Act 1833, registers of compensation paid to slave-owners, NDO4/26 Awards actually paid. The Bahamas received £128,294 10s 7d, and Bermuda £50,397 11s 7d. The Bahamas had 39 claims over £500, amongst which Lord Rolle, who received compensation of £4,333 6s 9d for 337 slaves, was easily the largest claimant and the only slave-owner readily identifiable as an absentee in this period (Return, p. 149; Bahamas No. 960).

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by enslavement over many centuries, and whose exploitation was undertaken in large measure on behalf of British slave-owners. Such an investigation of the British slave-owners, whose presence and nature as historic actors this study seeks to (re-)establish is essential both to exploring how Emancipation happened as and when it did, and – it is argued – to beginning to understand how the extent and limits of Britain’s complicity in slavery can be conceptualised. If Colley and others are correct in asserting that anti-slavery became a key ingredient in the making of British identity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, what did this imply for slave-owners who lived in Britain and stood so directly in opposition to the prevailing social and ethical currents, and how were they reconciled to the nation?<sup>16</sup> The absentee slave-owner, as an essentially liminal figure, should therefore be an ideal field of enquiry in the ‘new imperial history’. In fact, with the notable exception of an unpublished dissertation by Alexandra Franklin, very little work has been done that brings modern historiographical concerns to bear on British slave-owners.<sup>17</sup>

Much of the literature that touches on the absentee slave-owners continues to treat absenteeism, in Eric Williams’ phrase, as ‘the curse of the Caribbean’, foregrounding the consequences for the *colonial* societies of absenteeism and treating those consequences as entirely negative. Lowell Ragatz set out the basis for this conventional approach. He traced three phases in the creation of the absentee slave-owner (or ‘landlord’, as Ragatz significantly labelled such slave-owners): the prosperity

<sup>16</sup> L. Colley, *Britons: forging the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 370–81. According to James Walvin, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, anti-slavery had become ‘a defining quality of being British; a proof of the distinctive and divinely-inspired qualities of the British people’. Quoted in A. Lester, *Imperial networks: creating identities in nineteenth-century South Africa and Britain* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 25.

<sup>17</sup> A. Franklin, ‘Enterprise and advantage: the West India interest in Britain 1774–1840’, Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1992. Franklin examined the records of the West India Committee, as the organised expression of the West India interest in Britain, with a ‘new imperial’ sensibility, to pose questions of identity and representation beyond the conventional analysis of the Committee as a sectional pressure-group. For more traditional accounts of the ‘West India’ lobby in Britain, see L. M. Penson, *The colonial agents of the British West Indies* (London, 1924; reprinted London: Frank Cass & Co., 1971); ‘The London West India interest in the eighteenth century’, *English Historical Review*, 36.143 (1921), 373–92; ‘The origin of the Crown Agency Office’, *English Historical Review*, 40.158 (1925), 196–206; A. E. Furness, ‘George Hibbert and the defence of slavery in the West Indies’, *Jamaican Historical Review*, 5.1 (1965), 56–70; D. Hall, *A brief history of the West India Committee* (St Lawrence, Barbados: Caribbean University Press, 1971); and, more recently, A. J. O’Shaughnessy, ‘The formation of a commercial lobby: the West Indies, British colonial policy and the American Revolution’, *Historical Journal*, 40 (1997), 71–95.

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of the sugar-economy in the mid eighteenth century, which allowed the owners both to educate their children in England (*sic*) and to retire there themselves; the period from 1775 to 1815, when large numbers of estates passed into the possession of inhabitants of England (*sic*) by inheritance; and the period from 1815 to 1834, when ‘the greater part of them fell into the hands of creditors, chiefly West Indian traders in London and the outports, through foreclosing of mortgages’.<sup>18</sup> But his focus was on the destructive impact of absenteeism in the colonies, its social results seen as increasing the disproportion between blacks and whites, the debasement of colonial society (by the removal of the ‘natural’ governing elite of principal land-owners to Britain), and the passing of local pride and feeling in the colonies.<sup>19</sup> Douglas Hall’s challenge to this traditional model of absenteeism, in which he called for more focus on the specifics of time and place rather than reliance on generic models of absenteeism, enriched the discussion by emphasising the diversity of experience underlying the category of ‘absentee’.<sup>20</sup> More recently, Trevor Burnard returned to the question of absenteeism in eighteenth-century Jamaica, in order to test its true extent, to deepen Hall’s suggestive work about the diversity of ‘absentee’ experiences and to qualify, if not overturn, the notion of absenteeism as an unmitigated disaster for the colonies.<sup>21</sup>

The *resident* slave-owners have received attention within the context of the ‘new imperial history’, concerned to integrate metropole and colony and to bring to bear perspectives of race and gender on the local slave-owning communities. Christer Petley has examined the slave-owning society of St James’s parish in Jamaica and looked at the collision between colonial and metropolitan values.<sup>22</sup> Barry Higman has recently provided texture to the lives and work of the attorneys, the necessary corollary of absentee ownership.<sup>23</sup> David Lambert’s recent work exemplifies the ‘new imperial history’, meticulously applying a by-now familiar theoretical framework to Barbadian society at the time

<sup>18</sup> Ragatz, ‘Absentee landlordism’, p. 7.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>20</sup> D. Hall, ‘Absentee proprietorship in the British West Indies, to about 1850’, *Journal of Caribbean History*, 35.1 (2001), 97–121 (originally published in *Jamaican Historical Review*, 4 (1964), 15–35).

<sup>21</sup> T. Burnard, ‘Passengers only: the extent and significance of absenteeism in eighteenth-century Jamaica’, *Atlantic Studies*, 1.2 (2004), 178–195.

<sup>22</sup> C. Petley, ‘Boundaries of rule, ties of dependency: Jamaican planters, local society and the metropole 1800–1834’, Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick, 2003. See also J. P. Greene, ‘Liberty, slavery and the transformation of British identity in the eighteenth-century West Indies’, *Slavery & Abolition*, 21.1 (April 2000) 1–31.

<sup>23</sup> B. W. Higman, *Plantation Jamaica 1750–1850: capital and control in a colonial economy* (Mona, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2005).

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of abolition.<sup>24</sup> In focusing on Jamaica and Barbados, such recent works have tended to reinforce the bias of historiography to the old colonies, those in most perceptible decline towards the end of British colonial slavery.

Little work has been done directly on the social dimensions *in Britain* of absentee metropolitan slave-owning in the nineteenth century, to trace how the stock eighteenth-century character of the ‘West Indian’ was modified and normalised in the early decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup> These metropolitan slave-owners are largely invisible in the historiography of abolition. Seymour, Daniels and Watkis concluded that ‘there is little evidence to suggest that colonial land-ownership [i.e. slave-ownership] was a sufficient distinction to exclude such people from British elite society, although in certain situations such connections could cause fractures’, and argued, based on the case of their subject Sir George Cornwall, that ownership of colonial property was not an anomaly, but an addition to a varied portfolio of interests.<sup>26</sup> But sensible though their first conclusion seems, there is no empirical material adduced in support of it; and the second conclusion, on the ‘portfolio’ model of slave-owning, is not supported by the analysis later in this study for British rentier-owners, although it has more validity for a group of mercantile investors.

Histories of specific slave-owning families in Britain both raise the question as to how representative such families were, and confirm the value of the Slave Compensation Commission records. Pares on the Pinney family, Checkland on the Gladstones and most recently Smith on the Lascelles (subsequently the Earls of Harewood) have all delineated the processes of wealth-creation from slavery.<sup>27</sup> None was particularly interested in the identity and social tensions of a slave-owning

<sup>24</sup> D. Lambert, *White creole culture, politics and identity in the age of Abolition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>25</sup> F. W. Pitman, ‘The West Indian absentee planter as a British colonial type’, *Proceedings of the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association* (1927), 113–27, is suggestive, but addresses mainly the origins of absenteeism rather than the identity of the absentee in Britain.

<sup>26</sup> S. Seymour, S. Daniels and C. Watkis, ‘Estate and Empire: Sir George Cornwall’s management of Moccas, Herefordshire and La Taste Grenada 1771–1819’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 24.3 (1998), 313–51.

<sup>27</sup> R. Pares, *A West India fortune*, (London: Longman, 1950); S. G. Checkland, *The Gladstones: a family biography 1764–1851* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); Smith, *Slavery, family, and gentry capitalism*. There are also smaller-scale studies of individual absentee slave-owners, including: C. Taylor, ‘The journal of an absentee proprietor, Nathaniel Phillips of Slebech’, *Journal of Caribbean History* 18.1 (1984), 67–82; and V. E. Chancellor, ‘Slave-owner and anti-slaver: Henry Richard Vassall Fox, 3rd Lord Holland 1800–40’, *Slavery & Abolition*, 1.3 (December 1980), 263–75.

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family in private and public life, although there is abundant evidence in each of their efforts to ‘normalise’ their slave-derived wealth through redeployment into other forms of property, especially landed property, in Britain. All three also allow a testing of the methodology of this study by providing details from family papers of the results of the compensation process, which in each case corroborate the conclusions drawn from an examination of the Commission records.

This book, in seeking to redress the past neglect of the British slave-owners, is not a history of Emancipation, but an analysis of British slave-owning at the time of Emancipation through the prism of ‘slave compensation’. The compensation paid to slave-owners has itself attracted little attention from historians. The only general history of the compensation process is an unpublished thesis written over seventy-five years ago, a traditional but exhaustive administrative history that focuses on the organisation of the Commission before ending with an analysis of the relationship between Emancipation and the Great Trek.<sup>28</sup> Eric Williams drew on the Parliamentary Return of compensation payments to highlight individual slave-owners, and the examples he selected have tended to recur in the historiography.<sup>29</sup> More recently, Kathleen Mary Butler broke new ground in her examination of the impact of slave-compensation on Jamaica and Barbados.<sup>30</sup> Butler’s method of combining research in the colonial mortgage registers with the metropolitan records of compensation yielded valuable detailed examples of the interaction of mercantile creditors and slave-owners, and she highlighted the role of women as slave-owners and private creditors in the colonies. Ultimately, her focus of interest was the *local* impact of compensation in the two colonies, rather than its dimensions in metropolitan Britain, with which this study is concerned: she was uninterested in British slave-owners as such, and her conclusions tended to reinforce the traditional ‘mercantile’

<sup>28</sup> R. E. P. Wastell, ‘The history of slave compensation 1833 to 1845’, M.A. thesis, University of London, 1933. The Parliamentary Return itself has been analysed by Richard Lobdell, who drew from it statistics on the apparent structure of slave-ownership in each colony by number of owners, size of holding and sex. Professor Lobdell kindly made available to me his unpublished findings: R. A. Lobdell, ‘The price of freedom, financial aspects of British slave Emancipation 1833–38. Notes on research in progress’, unpublished paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Social Sciences History Association, Pittsburgh (October 2000).

<sup>29</sup> Williams, *Capitalism and slavery* highlights compensation payments to the Bishop of Exeter, p. 43; Earl St Vincent, p. 44; the Baillie family, p. 62; the Miles family, pp. 74–5; William Beckford and the Hibberts, p. 88; John Gladstone, p. 90; Henry Goulburn and the Earl of Balcarres, p. 94; and Joseph Marryat, p. 105.

<sup>30</sup> K. M. Butler, *The economics of Emancipation: Jamaica and Barbados, 1823–1843* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).