

Sedgewick, Augustine. *Coffeeland: One Man's Dark Empire and the Making of Our Favorite Drug*. New York: Penguin Press, 2020. 448 pp. \$18. Paperback ISBN-13: 9780143110743.

Augustine Sedgewick's twenty-six brisk chapters introduce the reader to the global history of coffee from a peculiar vantage point, the Las Tres Puertas coffee plantation at the foot of the Santa Ana volcano in El Salvador. Deftly interwoven within each chapter are how these coffee beans, trees, and labor and branding methods were shaped by, but also shaped, histories beyond these Pacific Central-American highlands. The author examines the innovations of coffee culture in San Francisco and in the US consumer market as a whole since the early twentieth century, tariff policy debates that organized global coffee production and trade, the impact of the Brazilian coffee business in Central America and the world, the industrial labor practices throughout the West, the scientific and philosophical ideas about life that accompanied the spread of coffee drinking, and finally, the very making of a postcolonial country, El Salvador. The plot begins with the kidnaping of Jaime Hill, the plantation's owner (and the founder's grandson) in 1979 by a revolutionary guerilla. The author returns to this event at the end with a political crisis that involved Bishop Romero after a long *study-in-scarlet* detour by Medieval Islam, the Spanish Conquest, Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels's Manchester, Dutch Java, and the other contexts mentioned above. The reader finishes this ambitious book by grasping the intimacy between the global history of this commodity and the authoritarian and revolutionary traditions of El Salvador, a country built around an export crop in times of globalization and world, revolutionary, and counter-insurgent wars.

Coffeeland's agile narrative can be read hence in dialogue with other great histories of commodities like those of sugar, cocaine, marijuana, bananas, cotton, and even coffee itself written by Sidney Mintz, Paul Gootenberg, Lina Britto, John Soluri, Sven Beckert, and Steven Topik. Sedgewick's approach points to coffee's deep imbrication with modern life: at the plantation, the factory, and the office, at the house and on the street, drunk by rich and poor, this commodity became central to modern urban life's basic structures and rituals and, therefore, to the global economy.

Two time periods serve as gravitational poles in this history. The first is the late nineteenth century, when plantations expanded over communal lands in El Salvador and set up the commercial and environmental conditions for coffee exports in a trade dominated by the U.S. and Brazil (the largest consumer and producer). The second is the expansion of the 1920s followed by the economic crisis of the 1930s when the reorganization of the global economy (and the New Deal domestic and foreign economics) made Salvadoran coffee further inseparable from US life. In both periods, we learn in fascinating detail how owners, overseers, and workers in El Salvador, and importers, retailers, and consumers in the U.S. valued and racialized this everyday magical drink. The author covers the types of trees and the way they were planted, the international standards for coffee qualities, the gender, physical, and management specificities of labor at the plantations, and the retail techniques, price-setting, and labor management styles around coffee in the United States. But it is perhaps the massacres and genocidal repression of the labor movement

and Indigenous villages in January and February of 1932 and the thread that connects them with the 1979-1992 civil war that continues to bring the Salvadoran workers' experience of hunger, the planter class's violence, and US economic interests to the center of coffee's history. We see US bankers, businessmen, and diplomats directly and willingly providing guns, credit, and legitimacy to the military dictatorship and the private militias and death squads that would root the coffee trade in the destruction of alternative crops and entire villages and the mass executions and burials of men, women, and children. Imbricated with this history of violence, we learn how labels like Arabica, Mocha, Brazil, Mild, and the "fair trade" denomination, resulting from branding strategies shaped by planters' and traders' access to different seeds, environments, and labor regimes, explain the very organization of our palate.

Choosing an English protagonist somehow detaches the reader from El Salvador and brings her closer to the well-known triumphs of global Anglo entrepreneurs. We see coffee mainly through the eyes of a self-made settler from Manchester, James Hill. Salvadoran characters are important to the story as well, like the revolutionaries Miguel Mármol and Farabundo Martí as well as Hill's son Jaime and a cast of local planters and military leaders, but they appear as secondary to the dominant perspective of the Anglo planter. The emphasis on his managerial innovations and smart dealings with the US market, combined with an exploration of philosophical and scientific ideas about coffee centered on US, British, and German intellectual traditions and a focus on the changes in US labor and consumption systems, may end up by making the reader see El Salvador as mainly a colonial scenario for US capitalism and a laboratory for the Anglo genius. Local ideas and worldviews appear rather as reactions to Hill's agency.

Labor regimes and their environmental and political contexts are masterfully researched and imbricated in this family business history, better illuminating Salvadoran history and our understanding of monoculture plantation capitalism. And at least in this reader, each cup of coffee enjoyed as I turned the pages of this excellent book provoked new questions—intellectual, geopolitical, environmental—about the history of commodities and its implications for the experiences of labor, taste, and historical writing.

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