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America and the Transatlantic Triangular Trade

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In the eighteenth century, cheap raw materials from the Americas and other emerging markets drove European world trade. Since then, the world population has grown rapidly, and production and consumption has been rising exponentially. We live in a globalized world: streets, air travel, railroads, and shipping lines transport products and people across the world within short periods of time and at relatively low costs. In a planet dominated and irreversibly altered by human activity, the consequences—climate change, species extinction, monocultures, deforestation, exploitation of natural resources, and the spread of livestock—add up. We have outsourced production and waste disposal and thereby lost sight of our ecological footprint. The concept of the Anthropocene sets the stage for change: instead of exploiting the earth, humans should be its caretakers.



America Transatlantic Triangular Trade
Daniela David-Spickermann

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America and the transatlantic triangular trade

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America and the Atlantic Triangular Trade
Europe – Africa – America – Europe
In the morning, Mr. Beckford will set sail for Africa. That sounds like an adventure. I want to come on board!

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Loaded with guns, glass pearls, steel, and liquor, we set sail. What is he planning to do with this junk?

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He is trading this junk for human beings. I didn't know that you could buy humans!

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Mr. Beckford treats them as if they are worth nothing. Humans are strange. I'm lucky I'm a rat.

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He sells his wares in America. They are called slaves now. They have to work hard in the fields.

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Now they are loading up the ship with sugar, spices, cotton, and coffee. Then it will head back to Europe.

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Here, the colonial goods are processed and sold for a major profit because they are exotic goods.

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It paid off for Mr. Beckford. He is already planning his next journey.
And people like him think that rats are disgusting...

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Artist's comment

Dealing with the history of triangular trade gave me cause to think: our prosperity is based upon the exploitation and forced migration of so many people. What did these people think and feel? What did the plantation owners, traders, and ship owners think and feel? The latter probably only thought about their own profit—a plan that totally paid off, as history has shown.

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Further readings:

- Sources and Literature for the Anthropocene Milestone Comics

Related links:

- Welcome to the Anthropocene. The Earth in Our Hands. Special exhibition at the Deutsches Museum http://www.deutsches-museum.de/en/exhibitions/special-exhibitions/archive/2015/anthropocene/
- Welcome to the Anthropocene. The Earth in Our Hands. Virtual exhibition on the Environment & Society Portal https://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/6354
- Transatlantic Slave Trade (Unesco) http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/slave-route/transatlantic-slave-trade/
- Comic-Anthology, Deutsches Museum Website http://www.deutsches-museum.de/sammlungen/entdecken/comics/