

MIT Seminar on Environmental and Agricultural History



The Carceral Landscape: Slaves, Horses, Dogs, Fields, Swamps, and Woods Walter Johnson, History, Harvard University

As well as vehicles for organizing labor, the plantations that defined the landscape of “the Cotton Kingdom” were vehicles for organizing nature. The hegemony of a single plant over the landscape of “the Cotton Kingdom” produced both radical simplification of nature. Cotton mono-cropping stripped the land of vegetation, leached out its fertility, and rendered one of the richest agricultural regions of the earth dependent upon up-river trade for food. It was within these material parameters that enslaved people in the Mississippi Valley lived, labored, resisted, and reproduced. This paper surveys the implications of this material interchange between human being, animal, and plant, treating the ecology of cotton production not simply as the context of human labor, but as determinative of the condition of enslaved humanity and of the tactical possibilities of enslaved resistance

Friday, October 26, 2012

2:30 to 4:30 pm

Building E51 Room 095

Corner of Wadsworth and Amherst Streets, Cambridge

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