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David Richardson, Anthony Tibbles, Suzanne Schwarz, eds. *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery.* Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007. xii + 315 pp. $75.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-84631-066-9.

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The Banality of Evil

Liverpool ships delivered more than one million slaves to the New World. Most of this activity was concentrated in the second half of the eighteenth century, when Liverpool surpassed Bristol and London in the trade. In the 1780s, for example, Liverpool accounted for 70 percent of the slaving ventures that originated in Britain. The contributors to *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery* are primarily historians with a background in either economic or demographic history. As a collection of essays, and one that sometimes sinks under the weight of its own apparatus of tables and appendices, this book will be read primarily by advanced students and specialists. Readers will learn a great deal about the day-to-day mechanics of the trade and its impact on various societies around the Atlantic basin. There are chapters on the Chesapeake and Jamaica. Paul Lovejoy and David Richardsonâs chapter on "African Agency and the Liverpool Slave Trade" argues that one of Liverpoolâs secrets was the creation of strong ties with indigenous African traders who could extend lines of credit and permit slave trading in an atmosphere of what the authors call "trust" (p. 44). Another contributor notes that "only Liverpool captains traded annually with all major African markets," creating a pool of expertise that other ports could only envy (p. 86). The editors deserve commendation for their willingness to situate this English city in its larger Atlantic context.

Specialists in British history will be especially interested in the chapters that attempt to quantify the effects of the trade on the residents of Liverpool itself, and on its region more generally. Madge Dresserâs stimulating social history of Bristol, *Slavery Obscured: The Social History of the Slave Trade in an English Provincial Port* (2001), was a major influence on many of the contributors. For a book on Liverpool, there is a remarkable amount of interesting material here relating to provincial ports elsewhere in England and Wales. Several contributors treat "Liverpool" less as a self-contained urban center than as a regional consortium. Melinda Elderâs chapter on the role of Lancaster and its neighboring ports in the slave trade is the most straightforward example of this. Some captains and merchants built their mansions in Liverpool, but others retired to their place of origin and set themselves up as country gentlemen there. Lancaster was one of dozens of communities that collaborated with Liverpoolâs slave trade. The Isle of Man, which enjoyed a unique legal status, served as a tax-free depository for Dutch imports to be sold later in Africa, benefiting Liverpool during the critical decades when it was emerging as a serious competitor to Bristol. The Manx loophole was closed in 1765, but Liverpool benefited from other accidents of geography, such as its proximity to a prosperous and populous hinterland that featured a textile industry specializing in cottons and linens, "the most important type of wares traded for African captives" (p. 22). Stephen D. Behrendtâs chapter on the officers and crews of slavers reveals a sharp regional split between Bristol and Liver-

pool. While only half of Liverpool sailors were of English origin, over 73 percent of sailors whose English abode is known came from Lancashire, Cheshire, Cumberland, or the Isle of Man. In contrast, the men who sailed out of Bristol hailed disproportionately from the West Country or from southern Wales (tables 3.4, 3.5). We have been inclined to see sailors as a roving and cosmopolitan lot, but these numbers suggest a high degree of parochialism in a deep sea, transcontinental trade. The statistics on the origin of seamen indicate yet another way that profit from the Liverpool slave trade dispersed across a great penumbra of smaller neighboring communities, finding its way into fishing villages and obscure seaports.

The old jibe that each brick in Liverpool was cemented by the blood of an enslaved African still provokes scholarly rebuttals and qualifications. David Popeâs chapter on "The Wealth and Aspirations of Liverpoolâs Slave Merchants" and Jane Longmoreâs chapter on the slave tradeâs overall impact on the city do not downplay the ill-gotten gains, but assess them in what the bookâs editors call a "clinical" rather than an "emotional" manner (p. 2). Pope examined wills, tax and probate records, and a number of other sources to learn more about the family fortunes of the cityâs 201 leading investors in the slave trade. He presents intriguing tables displaying the trajectory of social mobility across three generations; we learn the occupation of the slave merchantsâ fathers and then find out what the slave merchantsâ sons did for a living. There is also a table of the occupations of the sons-in-law, indicating what sort of match a slave merchantâs daughter might expect. Pope finds, predictably, enrichment and social elevation, though not on an extraordinary scale. He also issues a number of caveats. Many merchants had a complex investment portfolio, not deriving all their wealth from the slave trade. Equivalent upward mobility was entirely possible for Liverpool merchants who did not invest in the slave trade at all. However, Pope does not acknowledge as clearly as he might have that many other paths to wealth were predicated on the existence of either the African slave trade or of Caribbean plantation slavery. Longmoreâs chapter shows that this was particularly true of Liverpoolâs thriving manufacturing and shipbuilding sectors. Goods in high demand in the African market included cloth and guns, but also less obvious items like brass rods and clay pipes. She concludes: "A fairly crude aggregation would suggest that about 10,000 tradesmen, craftsmen, and seamen or about 1 in 8 of the population (plus their families) were reliant on the trade by 1790" (p. 243).

Quantification can be an extremely valuable tool, as David Eltis, Behrendt, Richardson, and Herbert S. Klein's edited collection *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (1999) illustrated. Several contributors to *Liverpool and Transatlantic Trade* were either involved in that project or are undertaking similar ones. However, in an essay–as distinguished from a database–just because something can be quantified does not mean that the reader must be presented with yet another number. The overall tone of this volume is of extreme caution–stick to the facts and debunk the generalizations propagated by others–but expecting your numbers to speak for themselves is a risky strategy in its own way. A proliferation of figures on the page, however desirable in a reference work, works differently here; it can actually obscure the occasional statistic that is new, surprising, or particularly important to an authorâs argument.

I found Brian Howmanâs chapter refreshing precisely because it embraced the historianâs calling to interpret the available evidence, even when that task involves a certain amount of speculation about what went on inside peopleâs heads. It is hard to write with precision about loyalties, ideologies, and identities, but Howmanâs account of the early ups and downs of the antislavery movement in Liverpool is nevertheless nuanced and sensitive. While some people clearly hated and feared the movement primarily because it threatened their source of income, others had more general concerns about its eccentric religious and political pedigree. The propertied elites took notice of the antislavery agitatorsâ sympathy with the American, French, and Haitian revolutions. Even the election of William Roscoe to Parliament in 1806, according to Howman, was not necessarily a sign of an abolitionist ground swell. This election result was more of a rejection of the incumbent, Banastre Tarleton, than an embrace of Roscoe, who in any case did not campaign as the man who was ready to abolish the slave trade. His vote against the trade in 1807 seems to have come as an unpleasant surprise to some in Liverpool, and he was greeted with a riot on his return. We cannot know very much about where Liverpoolâs small African-descended population fit into all this, but it would have been interesting to hear what we do know. Dresser made an effort to do this for Bristol, as Peter Linebaugh did for London.

How does the story end? Given that Liverpool continued to prosper from trade in slave-grown products (i.e., cotton, sugar), it is not clear why there is no chapter dealing with the final phases of the cityâs involvement with transatlantic slavery–as opposed to the slave trade itself. Suzanne Schwarzâ chapter on the Sierra Leone

Company offers one kind of denouement, since Freetown was intended to prove that West Africa could prosper without slave labor or the sale of human beings. However, she does not present evidence that Liverpool played a special role in the Sierra Leone project, and the chapter seems out of place in this volume. Longmore offers an economic verdict: the abolition of the slave trade led to a rapid and decisive change in Liverpoolâs occupational structure, with most manufacturing and shipbuilding jobs drying up. Only sugar refining endured to diversify what she characterizes as a city whose livelihood consisted of mere "fetching and carrying" after 1807 (p. 246). This was not an altogether surprising outcome; it was what they had learned to do best.

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