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Reviews of books

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David Richardson, Suzanne Schwartz, and Anthony Tibbles (eds.), *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008. 315pp. 4 figures, 35 tables. Bibliography. £50.00.
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The editors of *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery* point out that this book is a revisiting of a compilation written some 30 years ago under the title *Liverpool, the African Slave Trade and Abolition* (Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, Liverpool, 1976, edited by Roger Anstey and Paul Hair), utilizing more recent commentators researching this topic and in the light of modern statistical information and methods. The present book is not yet another chronological account of the slave trade from the middle passage to Abolition. Instead, it adopts a thematic approach, dealing with a wide spectrum of human players, including the merchants, plantation owners, Abolitionists and, of course, slaves, plus a geographical area covering Lancaster and Liverpool to North America, the Caribbean and West Africa.

Presenting a new book on the generic topic of the transatlantic slave trade might have been impeded by the fact that this is the year following the bicentennial of the abolition of the slave trade, with the expected plethora of authors and their publishers taking the opportunity to launch related books. But the potential danger of rehashing well-used material has been happily avoided in this publication, not the least important reason being the willingness of several of the contributors writing directly about the role of Liverpool itself in the slave trade to make full use of locally based available sources which could be missed by less scrupulous writers pragmatically churning out books on a topical subject from more widely known sources – writing about the capital of the slave trade from afar, so to speak. Indeed, Jane Longmore's chapter could hardly have been successful had she done otherwise. Some contributors, of course, did not need to use local sources. Burnard's chapter is chock-full of new material about the slaves themselves, often oddly and perversely missing from some works of which the object should perhaps be enslaved Africans.

In different ways, both David Pope and Jane Longmore's contributions offer an extremely interesting insight into the proceeds of the slave trade and how they impacted upon future generations of the families of those involved and, indeed, Liverpool and the general population. Pope's essay brought to mind the words of

Gomer Williams, a Liverpool author writing in 1897, who commented (in *History of the Liverpool Privateers*, London) that he felt compelled to refer to some individuals mentioned in his text only by their initials, owing to their now respectable middle-class families, only two generations removed from direct connection with slavery, being still resident in the City. Jane Longmore's contribution, '"Cemented by the blood of a negro"?', makes a good case that, rather than invest in the port's cultural activities such as libraries and theatres for altruistic reasons – 'laundering their ill-gotten financial gains', so to speak – eighteenth-century merchants were more inclined to spend their money upon their own estates or on infrastructure likely to be of benefit to themselves, such as port facilities and shipbuilding.

The contributions of Kenneth Morgan, Stephen Behrendt, Paul Lovejoy, David Richardson, Suzanne Schwarz and Trevor Burnard also provide, albeit indirectly, useful material beyond the confines of the transatlantic slave trade for those involved in the search for British black history, particularly black family history. Burnard offers valuable information of a more direct nature on the source countries of African slaves, the antecedents of both West Indians and many of our present-day Black British population. It was a little puzzling why, in note 37, he felt that the 27 slaves described as 'Indians' were 'presumably from . . . the Mosquito shore (Honduras). . . or from British North America', when there was, in fact, a Native American population in the form of the Taino people, an Arawak-speaking people, in Jamaica. Indeed, some present-day Jamaicans and their descendants, such the black Welsh athlete Colin Jackson, who was found to have as much as 17 per cent Taino ancestry in his DNA, still carry their genes today. This, of course, is a very minor criticism, as this was a very absorbing contribution. Suzanne Schwarz's 'Commerce, civilization and Christianity: the development of the Sierra Leone Company' outlines another source of black British settlers, the founding of the Sierra Leone settlement by slaves repatriated to their mother continent, if not their own particular home countries.

Since its opening in August 2007, many thousands of visitors to Liverpool's excellent International Slavery Museum have certainly been made aware of the full horrors of the slave trade. Having been suitably inspired by their visit to learn more, anyone seeking a clear, balanced and thoughtful presentation of the issues surrounding one of the most shameful episodes of human history could not do better than to arm themselves with a copy of this absorbing and well-edited book. For this reason, it is a pity that a more affordable paperback version is not available to the general public.

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Martin Spence, *The Making of a London Suburb: Capital Comes to Penge*. Monmouth: Merlin Press, 2007. xii + 131pp. 14 figures. Bibliography. £9.95 pbk.
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This modestly self-styled 'little book' comprises an account of the development of Penge as a suburb of the first capitalist world-city, from its humble rural manorial origins, when economic survival rested on the exploitation of ancient woodlands,