

Trading in War: London's Maritime World in the Age of Cook and Nelson. By MARGARETTE LINCOLN. Pp. xi + 292 + 27 illustrations, indexed. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018. £ 25.00. ISBN 978-0-300-22748-2. Hardback.

Much has been written on eighteenth-century British society, on the workings of maritime trade and finance, on the two long international wars in the last third of the century, and on life in London itself. The originality of Margarette Lincoln's new volume is using a specific location, London's maritime parishes, as a vantage point to look out onto the British and oceanic world of the time. The book is, it could be said, a biography of London's riverside districts, and as any good biography it illuminates both its explicit subject and the wider context in which it lived. The reader is paraded through a kaleidoscope of businessmen, sailors, traders, explorers, shipwrights, invalids, widows and wives, highwaymen, thieves and murderers, press gangs, fishermen and watermen, actors and artists. Every page is filled with commercial deals, global wars, workers' strikes, riots, inventions and discoveries, parliamentary elections, trials, fairs, ship launches and celebrations, as they took place, echoed or originated in that very peculiar part of London. 'The great thing about the maritime districts,' she writes, 'was that the world... came to them' (108).

Chapter one offers a detailed description of the riverside parishes, from Wapping to Greenwich on either side of the Thames, setting the scene; chapter two deals with businessmen and workmen, and chapter three moves on chronologically to examine the impact of the American War, taking the opportunity to illustrate the functioning and evolution of naval dockyards; chapter four is a foray on the well-beaten path of eighteenth-century crime and punishment, whereas chapter five gives an expert overview of a topic on which Dr Lincoln is one of the foremost authorities: the lives of the women connected to maritime work. The final three chapters tackle, respectively, the entertainments offered by life in the riverside districts, the impact of the 1793-1815 'French Wars', and finally the planning and construction of the two new enclosed docks at Wapping and the Isle of Dogs, which effectively marked the end of an era for this part of London.

The volume does not put forward any historical argument, except for the general point, only made explicit briefly at the end of the introduction and in the last two pages, that traditional narratives reducing the East End to a poor, marginalised area miss out the extraordinary vitality and importance of maritime London in the eighteenth century. Explicit discussion of the historiography is also absent. Rather than an argumentative tone, the book adopts a descriptive and narrative approach, collating anecdotes, background information, and vivid snapshots of life on the banks of the Thames. This results in an immersive reading experience. The author makes wide use of original archival sources, newspapers and Old Bailey records, but she also recounts or summarises well-known events.

On the whole, the book seems aimed at the general public, more than at academics. From the title onwards, the mention of Cook and Nelson is calculated to attract the interest of the non-specialist reader, who is later taken for an imaginary walk from Deptford to Greenwich with Cook himself (30-5). Enlisting celebrities for educational purposes is an extremely powerful device, yet it does not always flow too naturally, especially given that the two men – rightly – only play a very minor role in the volume, Nelson being essentially absent. Incidentally, his magnificent state funeral, a momentous event at the time, goes somewhat surprisingly almost unmentioned (except for a two-line remark on p. 34), even though it unfolded along most of the river stretch at the core of this book, setting off from Greenwich. Even had this been described, other less-known characters, like the Barnards and Slades, titans of the shipbuilding industry, or the myriad individuals 'lost to history' whom the book Thompsonianly sets out to 'recover' (ix), feature much more prominently, and seem unfairly pushed out of the limelight by the title. This, admittedly, may be an editorial decision. A clear choice was also made in terms of the footnotes, which are relatively limited given the density of detail. Dr Lincoln's knowledge of London is immense, and her primary

and secondary bibliography rich. Quite often, however, the information presented does not seem to be associated with references, making it difficult for the interested researcher to follow up on it.

Overall, anyway, this is a very informative book, written by an excellent scholar in the ideal position to do so, and a valuable source of knowledge for anyone interested in the history of East London and the eighteenth-century maritime world.

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