

Alan Forrest, *The Death of the French Atlantic. Trade, War, and Slavery in the Age of Revolution.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. pp. v+352. 6 maps. Hbk. ISBN 9780199568956. Hbk. £35.00)

Before 1791, the French Atlantic was a model for other European imperial regimes, its main colony of Saint Domingue the leading producer of sugar and coffee in the Americas. By 1815, in the wake of the Haitian Revolution, it was fast becoming an irrelevance, overshadowed by French imperial ambitions in the Mediterranean and elsewhere. Although the political and social aspects of this transformation of the French Atlantic have received renewed attention in recent years, the coverage of its economic aspects has been more fragmented, compared with the scholarship on colonial plantations, and Dale Tomich's landmark work on sugar and slavery in the remaining French West Indies between 1815 and 1848. In this book, Forrest offers an analytical synthesis which bridges this gap and views the revolutionary interlude as a connected political and economic process. The perspective adopted is that of the leading Atlantic ports in France, including Le Havre, Nantes, La Rochelle and Bordeaux, covering the sharp decline in colonial and slaving voyages, the impact of the Haitian Revolution and European warfare, and its political effects. Its approach is therefore neither the 'trans-Atlantic' or the 'circum-Atlantic' identified by David Armitage, and focussed on the region as a zone of interchange or comparison, or the 'entangled' Atlantic of Eliga Gould, but rather a 'cis-Atlantic' history, of the experience of a particular locality or set of localities within a broader Atlantic world.

To achieve this, Forrest relies heavily on the existing scholarship, using a limited amount of primary material mainly to illuminate and clarify key points. The coverage of Bordeaux and its economy before 1791, for example, draws extensively on the work of Paul Butel, especially his magisterial *Les negociants bordelaise* from 1974, as well as more recent work from other scholars, sometimes even doctoral theses that have not yet been published. The chapters on Saint Domingue and the impact of the Haitian Revolution organise and summarise scholarship by David Geggus, Carolyn Fick, Jeremy Popkin and John Garrigus. The value of the book therefore does not lie primarily in turning over new archival discoveries, but in surveying much of the recent literature on discrete aspects of the French Atlantic and bringing them into conversation with each other. As a result it is a shame that the net was not cast even wider, so as to bring a wider range of scholarship into the frame. There are no mentions, for instance, of the French tobacco monopoly up to 1791 and the many hundreds of tons of tobacco which passed through the French ports via London. As the comprehensive study by Jacob Price showed, this almost made the Chesapeake into an informal extension of the French Atlantic, and the end of the monopoly in 1791 and the disruption of the trade had an important impact on the French ports that had depended on it. The French Revolution similarly broke off the established links between Ireland and the French Atlantic ports, where the export of brandy paid for the import of Irish salt provisions for re-export to the French slave colonies in the Caribbean, a process examined by Louis Cullen, Thomas Truxes and most recently by Bertie Mandelbratt. By focussing largely upon direct trade between the French Atlantic ports and French colonial territories and the classic mercantilist itineraries,

Forrest therefore overlooks some of the richness of much recent work on the transnational character of Atlantic trade in this period.

As it stands though, the book provides a useful survey of the state of the scholarship on the French Atlantic, especially for those wanting an introduction to francophone literature, and provides two particular services in offering not only a connected narrative of the fall of the French Atlantic as it was seen by metropolitan merchants, but also one that assesses the interplay of economics and politics in this process. In fields where colonial merchants are often seen as peripheral actors in the story of the French Revolution between 1789 and 1815, or the clash between slaves, planters and metropolitan officials and reformers in the French Atlantic itself, Forrest provides a useful study which puts them for the first time at centre stage.

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