



Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool

Jacqueline Nassy Brown

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The port city of Liverpool, England, is home to one of the oldest Black communities in Britain. Its members proudly date their history back at least as far as the nineteenth century, with the global wanderings and eventual settlement of colonial African seamen. Jacqueline Nassy Brown analyzes how this worldly origin story supports an avowedly local Black politic and identity--a theme that becomes a window onto British politics of race, place, and nation, and Liverpool's own contentious origin story as a gloriously cosmopolitan port of world-historical import that was nonetheless central to British slave trading and imperialism.

This ethnography also examines the rise and consequent dilemmas of Black identity. It captures the contradictions of diaspora in postcolonial Liverpool, where African and Afro-Caribbean heritages and transnational linkages with Black America both contribute to and compete with the local as a basis for authentic racial identity. Crisscrossing historical periods, rhetorical modes, and academic genres, the book focuses singularly on "place," enabling its most radical move: its analysis of Black racial politics as enactments of English cultural premises. The insistent focus on English culture implies a further twist. Just as Blacks are racialized through appeals to their assumed Afro-Caribbean and African cultures, so too has Liverpool--an Irish, working-class city whose expansive port faces the world beyond Britain--long been beyond the pale of dominant notions of authentic Englishness. *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail* studies "race" through clashing constructions of "Liverpool."

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