twenty-first century are important sites of place-making and subject formation. As the ever more polarized debate on race, migration, and national sovereignty continues apace, historians have a potentially important contribution to make in pointing to the tenuous ground on which some of this debate is constructed. Some of the chapters in this edited volume do justice to this debate. Others, however, are too provisional and underdeveloped to contribute meaningfully to an important topic. The epithet 'all this sounds too obvious' applies to too much of this potentially interesting volume.

Handbuch Geschichte der Sklaverei: eine Globalgeschichte von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart

By Michael Zeuske. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013. Pp. lx+725. €129.95/US$182.00, ISBN 978-3-11-027880-4.

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To cut a long story short: this book needs to be discussed! Not only is it the first serious attempt by a single researcher to write 'a monographic world and global history of slavery' (p. 57), but it also adds a new perspective to current debates on how to define and explore the phenomenon of slavery in a global perspective. The goals set by the author are as ambitious as they are provocative and, although the way in which these goals are achieved do not fully live up to the reader's expectations, the arguments presented in this study need to be taken seriously.

Michael Zeuske, a specialist in Latin American history who has contributed to a micro-historical view on slaves and slave agency in Spanish America, the Atlantic, and the Caribbean for more than twenty years, has written a 'handbook of the history of slavery' and he has chosen a rather unusual approach for a historian. The conceptual starting point of his 'global history from the beginnings to the present' is the globalized world of today's 'human capitalism' or 'bio capitalism', as he calls it (p. 571). Roughly about two hundred years after the abolition of the 'great slavery' 'in the nineteenth-century "West"' (p. 219), very old forms of slaving are constantly regaining ground today, according to Zeuske. He argues that these forms of slaving exist and have always existed beyond the institution of slavery and a legally fixed slave status. They had been forced back to a local and hidden level on the ground by the British (and European) anti-slavery campaigns (p. 13) until the effects of the age of globalization allowed those very local forms of slaving to interact with each other on a trans-regional and global level.

The 'imperial historiographies' (p. 31) of the former colonial powers had followed this abolitionist's constriction on 'slavery as institution' and still contribute to a problematic fixation on 'great' and 'hegemonic' slaveries. Zeuske contends that current research on slavery runs two risks. On the one hand, numerous encyclopaedias, manuals, and atlases of a global history of slavery are springing up like mushrooms (especially in Anglo-American academia), which leads to the prolonging and the canonization of this 'distorted perception' of slavery (p. 43). On the other hand, the widespread 'cultural relativism' among 'critical intellectuals in the West', who tend to stress the 'unique individuality of any culture' (p. 199) and the 'exceptionality' of every form of slavery (p. 60), bars the path to a more integrative conceptualization of the different types and forms of slavery from a world and global historical perspective as it is conceived today (pp. 60–1).

Based on this analysis, Zeuske then pleads for a very large concept of 'slavery' and 'capitalism'. For him, the 'general function of a slave's body as capital' must be at the heart of a new definition of slavery. Slave-hunting and slave trade have always followed the principle of capital accumulation and profit maximization, and the lowest common denominator of all forms of slave-holding is the 'productive labour pressed out of the slave's body by force' (pp. 427–8). By conceptualizing 'human bodies as a multivalent form of capital' (p. 571), he seeks to 'deconstruct traditional images of slavery' and to draw long lines to the very old history of slavery beyond 'hegemonic slaveries' (p. 565) in order to open up the view on 'global historical realities of today's slaveries' (p. 568).

Even though this 600-page world history is full of redundancies and would definitely have benefited from better copy-editing, the book certainly contains important stimuli for scholars of trans-regional and global history. These can be found on three different levels. The first level concerns current research on slavery: Zeuske designs his world history of slavery not as it is usually done – from the continents or historical epochs – but from the oceans. In doing so, the islands

and peninsulas close to the coast appear as 'offshore interfaces of different slaving systems' (p. 266) in the sense of a 'global historical continuum' (p. 7). Instead of the outdated distinction between 'slave societies' and 'societies with slaves', he then drafts a global history of slaving along three major 'plateaus of slavery', which became manifest at different places at different times and could develop further independently from each other (pp. 122 ff.). Thus, from early forms of very locally organized forms of kin and clan slavery, a first plateau of slavery evolved under the influence of the Mongols in the thirteenth century, producing supra-regional slave-trade economies across the trading bases in the Black Sea region (pp. 174–5). On São Tomé and the Canary Islands in the sixteenth century, and on Barbados in the seventeenth, bases were then laid for Atlantic capitalism and the development of the second plateau of slavery, the so-called 'compounded forms of slave economies' (p. 269). Finally, Zeuske diagnoses the gradual formation of a third plateau of 'small, but globally existing slaveries' since the beginning of the modern age of globalization in the 1970s. In this perspective – and this will have to be commented on by African historians – Africa moves into the centre of the analysis and appears not only as the 'most important major player of slaving' in world history but also 'as teacher of the Europeans in terms of the capitalization of the bodies of war prisoners and kidnapped people' (p. 269). Therefore, according to Zeuske, Africa belongs to the West even in terms of historiography (p. 37).

The second level of discussion to which the book refers is the 'global turn' in history and current debates on a 'glocalization' of historical research. Zeuske, who was born and raised in socialist East Germany and, after the collapse of the GDR, was appointed professor for Latin American History in Cologne in West Germany, combines old German traditions of *Weltgeschichte* (world history) with a new global history approach. He draws long lines of evolution back and forth between the early days of humankind to the present and at the same time constantly includes the micro-level of local actors: that is to say, the slaves in the first place and also the slave-holders, slave merchants, and their staff (p. 78). The mapping and analysis of macro-structures goes hand in hand with the micro-historical dimension of the actors' perception (pp. 568–9).

The third level touches on the fundamental question of why we do historical research today. Besides a deep examination of primary sources and secondary literature, the book includes, last but not least, a political statement calling upon historians' social responsibility: 'Historians should also always wonder: what has become of my "old history" today; where is the present of history?' (p. 567). Taking note of the fact that Zeuske is not the only one who has recently tried to connect empirical historical research in a long-term perspective with a critical analysis of today's society, it might be time that global historians put this very old question of historiography up for discussion again.

To conclude, I would like to make a suggestion. The author might think of publishing an extended essay or a slim volume summarizing the main arguments of his book in English. By doing so it would certainly help to clarify the argument if, instead of constantly jumping between time, space, and aspects of slaving, his history on the grand scale was told through five or six micro-historical in-depth analyses.

The *Amistad* rebellion: an Atlantic odyssey of slavery and freedom

By Marcus Rediker. New York: Viking, 2012. Pp. 280. Paperback £20.00, ISBN 978-0-670-02504-6.

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In 1839 a correspondent of the 'proslavery' *New York Morning Herald* noted that

> These blacks have created a greater excitement in Connecticut than any event that has occurred there since the close of the last century. Every kind of engine is set in motion to create a feeling of sympathy and an excitement in their favour; the parsons preach about them, the men talk about them, the ladies give tea parties and discuss their chivalry, heroism, sufferings, thews and sinews, over their souchong. (p. 111)

The 'blacks' in question were the mutineers from the *Amistad*, who had taken control of the ship and attempted it to sail it back to the west coast of Africa. While imprisoned in a New Haven jail they had become, as the correspondent complained, both a major spectacle and a focal abolitionist cause.