

prevalence of a 'colonialist mentality' in Britain by stating that 'half of the population of Britain is largely or totally ignorant of its imperial history' (p. 224). But surely mentalities, outlooks and social psychologies can be impacted upon by trajectories of the past of which they are not fully aware, and impacts and legacies be of a more subtle and qualitative nature?

*The empire strikes back?* deals with a few instances of views from the other side – those of colonial subjects of their masters. It has a good section on Gandhi's visit to the Lancashire cotton mills in 1931 and his dialogue with workers and trade unionists. It also mentions a Swazi delegation that came to London in 1894 'to ask Queen Victoria for protection against the Transvaal' (p. 187), and whose members were impressed by 'the tolerant attitudes' of the English at home as compared with those of white settlers in southern Africa (p. 190). But it has nothing, for example, on Indian nationalists like Subhas Chandra Bose, who viewed British colonial rule as worse than fascism, and the Bengal famine of 1943 as a crime overshadowing the Holocaust. And nothing either on the endless number of other delegations to London from Africa – like the Zulu King Cetshwayo's in 1882 – who got nothing but a snub and continued dispossession out of their attempts at dialogue with the empire.

It is the main weakness of the book that it focuses so exclusively on Britain. If nothing else, postcolonial studies have at least succeeded in pointing out the parochial nature of such a perspective – imperial voices and representations do not make sense (and cannot be understood as part of global history) unless we also listen to the responses and counter-offensives they were met with. Europe has been – in Dipesh Chakrabarty's phrase – too far 'provincialized' for it to continue to be treated simply as the centre, and accounted for exclusively in its own terms.

### Atlas of slavery

By James Walvin. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2006. Pp. xiv + 146. £19.99.  
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Over the last decades James Walvin has proven to be one of those rare historians capable of bringing

scholarly knowledge about American slavery from the academic into the public domain. As demonstrated in numerous publications, Walvin knows how to make complex issues comprehensible to non-specialist audiences in a fluent and entertaining style. In this short atlas, Walvin again exhibits the literary skills that his readers have grown familiar with.

The title suggests an overview of slavery throughout human history, but the atlas focuses on slavery in the Americas and its wider Atlantic context. Walvin defends this limitation by arguing that American slavery was in two ways quite distinct from earlier and later forms of slavery. First, although most slave systems in world history depended on the enslavement of distant peoples and their movement from one region to another, the slave trade from Africa to the Americas took place on an unprecedented scale. During a period of roughly three centuries it connected the social, economic and political lives of people on three different continents. Second, slavery in the Americas, and the transatlantic slave trade that fed it, was sharply defined by race. In the Atlantic world slaves were almost exclusively of black African descent. Following the work of David Eltis, Walvin points out that Europeans in want of labour for their American settlements turned to African slaves, rather than some other form of coerced labour. At the time the Atlantic slave trade started, Europeans were restricting slavery at home; Africans were nonetheless still eligible for enslavement. Europeans preferred to transport African slaves to the Americas and not draw on European forced labour or develop a plantation complex in Africa, Walvin contends, because a system based on African slavery simply worked. Slavery had been practised in Africa for centuries, so Europeans were merely tapping into existing slave supply networks. Doing so did not interfere with contemporary notions of freedom, and developing a plantation economy in Africa was neither ecologically nor politically feasible.

The book's chapters, twenty in total plus an introduction, are all very short. Eighty-seven maps, mostly copied or adapted from existing publications, are spread throughout the text to help convey an 'historical geography of slavery' (p. xiii). The narrative is largely chronological. First the reader is introduced to slavery in the ancient world, the pre-Atlantic African slave trade and slavery in Europe. Next is a block of fourteen chapters devoted to American slavery from its rise in the sixteenth to its fall in the nineteenth century. After an overview of early Portuguese expansion in the Atlantic, Walvin discusses the participation of

several different regions – Britain, Africa, Brazil, the Caribbean, and North America – in the Atlantic slave system. The middle part of the book deals with the Atlantic crossing and general directions of trade between Africa and the Americas. This synopsis of American slavery ends with a discussion of slave resistance, abolition, and the emergence of Asian indentured labour. The book's final chapters focus on the slave trade in East Africa and the Indian Ocean, which was both older and lasted longer than the Atlantic traffic, and on more recent forms of slavery such as experienced in Nazi Europe and the Soviet Union. At the back of the atlas is a chronology of slavery in the Americas from 1502 to 1888 as well as a guide to further reading.

Walvin provides an eloquent and compelling synthesis of the historical literature on Atlantic slavery, although at times he could have done better. In the Atlantic world, Africa seems to be Walvin's weakest region. For instance, he mistakenly calls the European forts on the West African Gold Coast 'slave forts' (p. 52; also map 23). Nearly all of these settlements were built in the seventeenth century because of the gold trade, which preceded the Atlantic slave trade in this part of Africa. Furthermore, he argues that 'British slave traders gathered Africans wherever they could find them, acquiring handfuls at different places, sailing from one spot to another, until the captain had decided he had enough' (p. 46). He neglects recent work that not only points to regional concentration in the African trade, but also to the strong linkages that existed between slave ports from different continents. Liverpool's close ties with the Biafran ports of Bonny and Calabar is just one example. Also few scholars would still argue that 'until 1738, the British sought to overcome the powerful Dutch presence in the

Atlantic slave trade' (p. 79). The Dutch never dominated the Atlantic slave trade and were already minor players by the start of the eighteenth century. Finally, in an attempt to underline the African role in the slave trade Walvin comes up with the puzzling statement that '90 percent of all Africans destined for the slave ships were sold by other Africans' (p. 49) I am not sure how he would fill in the remaining ten percent, but these were surely not all captured and sold by Europeans.

The maps exhibit more important shortcomings. Often a time frame is missing, or the indicated period does not match the map's content. Maps 5 and 6, for example, depict Africa and Asia in the sixteenth century. The first shows Asante as the dominant polity on the Gold Coast, although its rise to regional supremacy only started in the early eighteenth century. The second traces the establishment of European trading posts in Asia, which in the case of Holland, Britain and France date from the seventeenth century. Other maps do not fully transmit the intended message. Thus map 43 tracks African arrivals in the Americas by region, but while the Danish possessions are included, the Dutch are not; moreover, Brazil, the largest recipient of African slaves, is erroneously referred to under the label 'All European powers'. Map 81, indicating major American slave emancipations, does not include Brazil, the United States and Surinam.

Errors like these could have been avoided if a bit more time had been spent in the editorial process. Similarly, while the text was apparently not to contain source references, on some pages one can still find a few notes that must have escaped the editor's attention. Overall, however, these are minor distractions for the reader of an otherwise enjoyable and commendable introduction to the study of American slavery.