

tide of history; how else to account for “the last gasp of empire” that was Suez, which saw France and Britain acting in concert, albeit with different rhetorical justifications? The language of internationalism was ubiquitous on both sides, now that international opinion rejected the very words “imperialism” and “empire.” But where the Conservative Anthony Eden stressed Colonel Nasser’s lawlessness and British traditions of working for peace, Socialist prime minister Guy Mollet insisted that the wider stability of North Africa was at stake.

A short summary cannot do justice to the richness of this lucidly written and well-illustrated contribution to what certain French historians are calling “histoire croisée”—entangled history. If “new imperial historians” have neglected high politics and relations between empires, Thomas and Toye here convincingly redress the balance. As they point out, the extensive public debates that occurred in both countries at moments of imperial crisis were absolutely critical to arriving at a position on Anglo-French issues. This said, readers with a prior knowledge of the two national politics in question will get the most out of *Arguing about Empire*. And, in the spirit of ongoing Anglo-French rivalry, I would note that British imperial rhetoric is more thoroughly explored in these pages than that of France. But then, who had the bigger empire?

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BRIAN WARD. *Martin Luther King in Newcastle upon Tyne: The African American Freedom Struggle and Race Relations in the North East of England*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Tyne Bridge Publishing, 2017. Pp. 308. \$22.23 (cloth).
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In this lively study, Brian Ward uses the November 1967 visit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to Newcastle upon Tyne as the starting point for a broader foray into the history of race and rights in the North East of England. Tying together a range of personal and institutional histories on a local, national, and international level, Ward sheds new light on King’s historic 1967 visit to accept an honorary doctorate in Civil Law from Newcastle University, as well as making a persuasive case for the region’s broader role in and engagement with global freedom struggles.

Ward is no stranger to the British northeast, having cut his academic teeth at the Universities of Durham and Newcastle during the 1990s before returning to the region as Northumbria’s first professor of American Studies in 2012. This local flavor ably complements Ward’s expansive knowledge of the African American freedom struggle, exhibited through award-winning studies such as *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness and Race Relations* (1998) and *Radio and the Struggle for Civil Rights in the South* (2004). The roots of Ward’s interest in King’s visit to the northeast can be traced back to his unearthing of previously lost archival footage of the trip in 1992, and in many ways *Martin Luther King in Newcastle upon Tyne* represents the culmination of an intellectual journey started more than two decades ago, one that serves to showcase its author’s vast knowledge of race relations in Britain and the United States. At the same time, the tone and pace of the book remain engaging and pleasingly accessible, with academic jargon kept to a minimum.

Ward organizes the work into twelve chapters spread across four sections, although the bulk of material here is concentrated within the first two sections of the book. Part one, “The Visit,” focuses on the circumstances behind, rationale for, and impact of, King’s visit to Newcastle in November 1967. Ward expertly sketches out the minutiae of King’s short stay in the northeast, demonstrating how his seemingly unusual decision to accept the university’s invitation can be

connected to his “burgeoning sense of international responsibility and solidarity” (48). Readers are also provided with some valuable contextual scholarship on local media coverage of the African American civil rights movement in Newcastle, as well as a rich close-reading of King’s impromptu speech at the convocation. Part two, “Local Contexts, Global Connections,” seeks to situate King’s visit within two distinct, yet interwoven northeastern histories; first, the region’s “long tradition of political radicalism and support for progressive social movements,” and second, a largely forgotten history of “racial, ethnic and religious diversity ... in which African American fugitive slaves and abolitionists once played a significant part” (77). Over four engaging chapters, Ward seeks to re-center the region’s role in anti-slavery and abolitionist activism, demonstrating how the British northeast has occupied a fascinating, if someone unconventional place within broader histories of the black Atlantic.

In part three, “Take a Look at America,” Ward returns to the 1960s to address the intersections of race relations in the United States and the British northeast. King’s visit to Newcastle in November 1967 and his subsequent assassination in April 1968 coincided with a moment of intense anxiety in British race relations, as the nation grappled with the end of empire and an influx of migrants from the “New” Commonwealth (a term used to differentiate black and brown migrants from the Caribbean, Africa, and South Asia from migrants originating in the “white” Commonwealth of countries such as Australia, Canada, and New Zealand). Just as the leadership role of King had come under fire from more militant activists such as Stokely Carmichael in the United States, so too were British civil rights activists and organizations being challenged by younger and more radical activists such as Michael de Freitas and Obi Egbuna, a Nigerian writer who shortly before King’s 1967 visit had founded the Universal Coloured People’s Association, Britain’s first Black Power group. Part four, “Legacies and Lessons,” jumps to the present through discussing the impact of Newcastle’s 2017 “Freedom City” project. Ward traces the development of this ground-breaking initiative marking the fiftieth anniversary of King’s visit to the British northeast, contrasting it with the region’s often fitful attempts to cultivate the legacy of King’s 1967 Newcastle sojourn.

While Ward’s research and prose are excellent throughout, elements of the book’s editing and overall structure may frustrate some readers. Despite his best efforts, at times the chronological scope of the text feels unwieldy. This is not helped by the book’s organization, with sections moving from the 1960s to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, back to the 1960s and jumping ahead to the present. While Ward’s ambition is commendable, it would perhaps have been more prudent to adopt a narrower lens through which to address the connections between King and antiracist activism in the British northeast. A useful comparison in this regard is Stephen Tuck’s *The Night Malcolm X Spoke at Oxford Union: A Transatlantic Story of Antiracist Protest* (2014), which, like this study, homes in on a single incident to address broader questions of race and rights in a transatlantic context, but arguably does so in a more clearly structured way.

Setting aside such concerns, there is much to applaud here. Ward’s book offers an important intervention into discussions of transatlantic activism and race relations in the United Kingdom, helping to draw attention to a dramatically understudied region and its connection to both the African American freedom struggle and local histories of elite and popular political radicalism. Eloquently written and richly illustrated, *Martin Luther King in Newcastle upon Tyne* provides a fascinating insight into the specifics of King’s visit to Newcastle, and places this encounter within a much longer relationship between the British northeast and the black diaspora.

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