

essay looking at gender dimensions of the transition to freedom, considering what might have happened in socio-economic affairs had laws and social practices shown more favour to women. It might also have explored the meaning behind labels that appear frequently in the book as disapproval of male hegemony. There are numerous references, for example, to patriarchal male authority to describe post-emancipation black households, but the reader is left unclear whether this meant, in terms of social practice, that most such households had authoritarian and rigid male leadership or whether there were more consensual practices based on mutual adult choice and agreements. The paperback version of the book is good value for money but the hardback is overpriced compared with books on slavery and emancipation issued by virtually any other university press. Nevertheless, this book is a welcome addition to the literature on gender, slavery and colonialism, and it can be used fruitfully at different levels by undergraduates, research students and scholars.

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KENNETH MORGAN

***Slavery and the British Empire: From Africa to America.* By Kenneth Morgan.** Oxford University Press. 2007. 231pp. £50.00.

Although unfortunately expensively priced, this is a first-rate work that deserves much praise. In this overview of slavery, the slave trade and abolitionism in the British empire, Morgan provides a work that ably orientates students and will provide an effective reminder to teachers. Morgan deftly moves amidst the various controversies, to offer an effective account that explains the economics of the slave economy while also being fully conscious of its many cruelties. He is also aware of the various pulses of the trade, as economic opportunities in the West Indies were increasingly supplemented on the mainland. There, the availability of Native American slaves could not keep pace with demand, while this source was also compromised by the impact of disease and warfare on Native American numbers. Morgan argues that the main stimulus of the slave trade to the British economy lay in increasing demand, rather than in providing capital to stimulate industrialization. He also underlines the extent to which ending the slave trade was not perceived at the time as impairing Britain's interest in the Caribbean sugar colonies. This book is of greater interest than its title might suggest as it provides an important introduction to the economics and politics of empire and to Atlantic slavery as a whole.

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JEREMY BLACK

## Medieval

***Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland: The Dynasty of Ívarr to AD 1014.* By Clare Downham.** Dunedin Academic Press. 2007. xx + 338pp. £25.00.

Downham's book, largely the product of her doctoral thesis as she states at the outset, is a worthy successor to and extension of Alfred Smyth's *Scandinavian Kings in the British Isles 850–880* (1977). It provides as complete a picture as possible of the exploits and impact of Ívarr and his successors to the battle of Clontarf in 1014. The book is arranged geographically, starting with Ireland and then moving to England (which takes two chapters), then North Britain

subdivided into Alba, Strathclyde and Galloway before tackling Man and the Isles, and finally Wales. A short conclusion sums up the impact of the dynasty but there follows an invaluable prosopography of Viking leaders mentioned in the Irish Annals to 1014 and a comprehensive bibliography and index. The latter can be used to expand on the entries in the prosopography. A number of genealogical tables aid the reader's understanding of the labyrinth of Viking personal names: for example, another Ívarr, king of Waterford in the tenth century, apparently had two sons and two grandsons all named Røgnvaldr. However, as the author points out, the very repetition of personal names may help to identify Ívarr's descendants. The text is accompanied by a series of maps which are crisp and clear, with one exception illustrating the reign of Edward the Elder, which is hand-drawn, cluttered and curiously out of keeping.

The author presents a detailed analysis of Ívarr and his family and their activities. Every argument is meticulously referenced, as the full footnotes on each page attest, and Downham retains a healthy scepticism towards the source material throughout. Occasionally she is perhaps over-abrupt in her dismissal of the arguments of other scholars. For example, she dismisses Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjølbye Biddle's suggestion that the most likely occupant of the exceptional mausoleum burial at Repton was Ívarr himself. Certainly several kings and jarls are mentioned in English sources in the period, as she says, and some might be candidates for the Repton burial, but Downham perhaps underestimates the detailed arguments advanced by the Biddles in support of their interpretation. This is perhaps the only occasion when her treatment of archaeological sources is less than sure. Normally where she interprets fieldwork (from Dublin e.g. on p. 27) she has a complete grasp of the latest work and fully integrates it into her discussions. But *Viking Kings* is much more than a narrative of the activities of Ívarr and his dynasty. In each geographical area in turn Downham interprets and reinterprets events to show the impact which Ívarr's family had on each region and on the British Isles. The dynasty 'loomed large in Welsh politics'. The rulers of Man and the Isles 'posed the greatest threat to English power in Britain' in the second half of the tenth century. Wide-ranging and thorough, attractively presented and reasonably priced, *Viking Kings* is an essential read for anyone interested in the Viking Age in the British Isles. Clare Downham should be congratulated particularly for her deftness in handling exceptionally difficult source material and the clarity she brings to its interpretation.

*University of Exeter*

DEREK GORE

***Elves in Anglo-Saxon England: Matters of Belief, Health, Gender and Identity.***  
By Alaric Hall. Boydell. 2007. xi + 226pp. £45.00.

In this volume Alaric Hall uses a combination of linguistic and anthropological approaches to explore the social significance of Anglo-Saxon elf beliefs, charting changes and continuities in these beliefs from the pre-Christian era to the end of the Anglo-Saxon period. He suggests that many current ideas about these issues are based on outmoded scholarly methodologies.

The book is likely to appeal primarily to literary scholars and linguistic specialists, particularly those with an interest in early medieval Germanic languages. This is partly a function of the work's contents, but partly also, it must be said, because it is written in a very dense style that makes few concessions