

HALL, Catherine — *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830–1867*. London: Polity Press, 2002. Pp. xviii, 556.

It has now become almost commonplace to assert that Empire lay at the heart of nineteenth-century Britain. Advertising, exhibitions, architecture, and popular culture all bore the stamp of Britain's imperial stretch: cricket, curry, and daring tales of imperial exploits that filled the pages of even provincial newspapers all reflected how pivotal the Empire was to British experience and identity. Catherine Hall steps into this lively field of historical investigation with an original and meticulously researched analysis of nation and empire. She focuses on the Birmingham Baptist mission to Jamaica, eschewing the more familiar focus on London as the embodiment of the "metropole" and Bengal of the "colony". Beginning in the 1830s when the anti-slavery movement was at its height, Hall investigates the connection between Baptist missionaries primarily from Birmingham and Jamaica. She starts by demonstrating how missionaries to Jamaica took up the cause of abolition and how ordinary men and women in Birmingham were drawn into the empire by the anti-slavery movement. Hall traces the missionary dream to transform Jamaican society and to turn emancipated Jamaicans who had embraced Christianity into respectable wage labourers. She follows the decline of these early utopian aspirations which, by the early 1840s, were already faltering; the following two decades were marked by hardening racialist ideas and an increasing scepticism about the possibility of creating in Jamaica a Christian commonwealth founded on free labour and the respectability of family life. Fault lines emerged among the Baptists over many issues, not least Jamaican leadership of churches, and, as Hall states, "This Baptist family was indeed a potential hotbed of disruption and dissension" (p. 161).

The book is divided into two parts that deal with the same time period (1830–1867), but from different vantage points: Jamaica is foregrounded in the first part, and Birmingham in the second. Although telling a narrative from different perspectives means gaps in the first rendition and some repetition in the second, Hall's decision to organize the book in this way works as well as any other format. There is no easy way to tell simultaneous stories. Hall employs a large cast of characters (Knibb, Phillippo, Burchell, Sturge, and Dawson, to name just a few), and the comprehensive coverage of so many different missionary voices enables her to highlight effectively the nuances and contradictions within non-conformist discussion of race and slavery. Layering upon layering of the details of the missionaries' lives contributes to the richness of Hall's analysis; the depth of archival research is one of the book's notable strengths. The main actors of Hall's narrative are men, and women appear only fleetingly in their supporting roles as missionary wives and daughters. She is more interested in tracing how masculinity was central to colonialism than excavating the lives of individual women, notwithstanding the considerable impact these women had, for, as Hall argues, many stayed in Jamaica and regarded it, in a striking inversion of the colony/metropole divide, as "home". Knibb's daughter Annie married Ellis Fray, one of the first "native agents" and a coloured man, "thus demonstrating through her marriage her family's belief in the universal family" (p. 171). Hall does not deal extensively with how Jamaicans responded to the proselytizing efforts of Birming-

ham's missionaries, except through the eyes of missionaries, alternately exhilarated by the large number of converts and downcast by the religious practices that emerged out of this encounter. But this does not detract from the book, for Hall's aim was not to analyse Jamaican peasant society, but rather to examine the experience of imperial men, criss-crossing the boundary between colony and metropole and the "everyday racial thinking" that grew out of this movement.

In this book, Hall continues the exploration of the centrality of gender to Victorian society so perceptively developed in her earlier book *Family Fortunes*. She deftly examines how expectations about gender were part of the missionary world view. Especially persuasive is Hall's examination of the resonances and contradictions of the constant use by missionaries of the metaphor of the family to describe their relationship to freed Jamaicans, in part, she argues, because family seemed able to incorporate the differences and inequalities of the relationship. This language of the family was also critical to refashioning Jamaican society in the image of nonconformist Birmingham. While planters attempted to retain control over family labour, Baptist missionaries encouraged women and children to withdraw into the domestic realm of the family: women and children were not to be wage labourers like their male counterparts.

Hall traces the nuances and contradictions within shifting understanding of race primarily among Baptists, but also more widely in Victorian Britain. She examines the ideas of race that had dominated the early anti-slavery cause, reflecting belief in a universal family of man that transcended racial divide and in the possibility of Jamaican churches growing from infancy to full manhood. A consideration of how contemporary intellectuals defined race and a hierarchy of civilization might have enriched Hall's analysis, especially because, at the same time as the Birmingham Baptists were struggling to maintain a notion of universal family of man, Victorian liberal intellectuals were finding their universalist premises challenged by Empire. Anthropologists, ethnologists, and legal scholars in other parts of Britain were re-conceptualizing the understanding of the primitive and the civilized which had come of the Scottish Enlightenment school of conjectural historians. The language of universal family lost ground to more racialized ideas by the 1860s, though Hall is careful not to depict this transition too starkly and sees vestiges of the older universal language in the later period.

Hall handles religion deftly and perceptively, and she succeeds in capturing the experiential force of a "vital, serious or real Christianity" (p. 86). As Hall writes, "Faith was at the heart of the missionary endeavour: a belief in the depravity of mankind and the absolute necessity of a change of heart with Christ as the only route to salvation. The rebirth of the Christian man and woman, embedded in the Christian household, the finding of a new sense of self in Christ, was central to the evangelical project" (p. 92). She examines how Baptist notions of conversion as a making of new men and women conflicted with the persistence of indigenous religious forms and tracks the despair expressed by missionaries, especially after the mid-1840s, about the syncretic religions articulated by Jamaicans fusing Christianity on myalist practices.

Another merit of the book, which sets it apart from some other cultural histories of imperialism, is its attention to mid-Victorian politics. Debates over the reform of

the franchise lurk in the background of Hall's book, and she carefully makes links between the Birmingham-Jamaica connection and domestic politics: for example, in shifting ideas about the "manly citizen". The book also engages the dilemmas of British identity, and, like others, most notably Linda Colley, Hall argues that "we can understand the nation only by defining what is not part of it" (p. 9). Accordingly, Hall argues that race is critical in several ways to the articulation of Englishness in the mid-nineteenth century by framing a "new Christian patriotism", though this dominant focus on race and gender sets aside other aspects of identity.

Civilising Subjects is a *tour de force* and promises to deepen our understanding of how Empire rebounded back on Britain.

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HARSHAV, Benjamin — *Marc Chagall and his Times: A Documentary Narrative*. Translations by Benjamin and Barbara Harshav. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004. Pp. xx, 1026.

HARSHAV, Benjamin, ed. — *Marc Chagall on Art and Culture*. Translations by Benjamin and Barbara Harshav. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003. Pp. xiv, 225.

In 1933, only a few months after Hitler became chancellor in Germany, Nazis in Mannheim seized Marc Chagall's painting *The Rabbi* and gleefully set it on fire in a public ceremony against "degenerate art". Four years later, in 1937, Chagall openly denounced Hitler as "a man screaming, a man who makes himself into a god, and wants to devour the Jews" (*Marc Chagall and his Times*, p. 471). By the time of the war, caught in Vichy France, Chagall was in danger of becoming one of those Jews destroyed by this would-be god. After being arrested by French police in Marseille in 1941, he managed to escape with the help of an intrepid American, Varian Fry, who brought him an invitation for an exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art. The story of Chagall's flight from Nazism (and the subsequently dangerous voyage of his daughter Ida from Spain to New York) is just one compelling incident among many in Chagall's rich life, revealed in these superb two volumes on the artist by Benjamin Harshav — the Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Professor of Hebrew and Comparative Literature at Yale University. (A third book, planned by the author, will study Chagall's art — to be called *The Art of Marc Chagall*.)

Harshav's first volume (an enormous work!) considers the life and art of Chagall through letters, memoirs, poems, government documents, and illustrations. The length of the volume was obviously necessitated by the hundreds of documents Harshav included in this work, even though he admits he used only about one-third of the most representative letters located in archives or from personal sources. Most of these documents have never been translated until now. One of the most remarkable aspects of this volume is the sheer accomplishment of Harshav's discovery of sources. As he notes: