

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:

Preparing Chagall's multilingual letters and texts for a contemporary reader involved international detective work, seeking and finding letters and manuscripts in dozens of public and private archives.... In addition, I tried to identify the dates and events; place the texts in their chronological context, where they responded to and complemented each other; decipher allusions to persons or events mentioned in them; and provide hundreds of annotations. Thus, I tried to reconstruct the world in which Chagall moved — a large chunk of the twentieth century. (*Marc Chagall and his Times*, p. xi)

Harshav and his wife Barbara translated these sources into English from Russian, French, German, Hebrew, and Yiddish. As a scholar who has also sought out and translated personal letters (in my case, those of nineteenth-century German art gallery director Alfred Lichtwark), I am astounded by how much work Harshav has done here. The final result is, simply put, a huge achievement in the area of Chagall studies. Furthermore, historians of twentieth-century culture, and certainly of modern Jewish culture and history, will find these two volumes essential reading — since Chagall's life intersected at many points with the dramatic shifts in European art from the late nineteenth century onwards and with the revolutionary changes in the lives of East European Jewry during the same period.

In *Marc Chagall and his Times*, we consider Chagall's life before the First World War (in Russia, Paris, and Berlin), in the interwar period (in Vitebsk, Moscow, Berlin, Palestine, and Paris), during his wartime exile in America (to 1948), and then in France in the postwar era. Each section is introduced by Harshav, as he explains the details of Chagall's life at that point. Indeed, throughout the book Harshav provides an ongoing narrative voice, but he does not comment specifically on the meaning or interpretation of the documents: this is left up to the reader to decide. What emerges from the book is a mesmerizing story of Chagall's life in the twentieth century, both as an artist whose identity merged his experiences in Russia and in France and as a Jew whose sense of Jewishness remained central to his art. Harshav describes his book as akin to a nonfictional novel, and — indeed — it offers a compelling story that is less academic analysis than captivating biography. And what a life it is! Chagall was born in 1887 and lived until 1985, when he died at the age of 98.

The second volume is a smaller work, with a concise introduction to Chagall's life and art (see "The Texts of a Multicultural Artist") that would be of assistance to any student or scholar beginning work on Chagall. The bulk of the book is a collection of Chagall's lectures, speeches, and essays, translated from Yiddish, Russian, and French by the Harshavs. In addition, there are two interviews with Chagall (from 1944 and 1967) and a translated version of the first book on Chagall's art by Russian critics Abram Efros and Yakov Tugenhold (originally published in 1918). All of these texts have been translated from original manuscripts and are annotated. Thus, for the Chagall expert, these works are crucial sources.

The story of Marc Chagall's life began in Vitebsk, a bustling Jewish city in the Russian "Pale of Settlement". Russian Jews were geographically separated in this large province that encompassed sections of Poland and Lithuania, and most Jews were barred from crossing into the Russian empire proper. Chagall lived here until he was 13, at which point he won special permission to study in St. Petersburg — the begin-

ning of a long journey that would take him to Moscow, Berlin, Paris, New York, and the French Riviera. As Harshav emphasizes, throughout his life Chagall's Jewishness was a major influence upon his art. Notably Chagall drew inspiration from the life he had encountered as a child. For example, his grandfather's habit of sitting on the chimney of his house in Lyozno, eating sweet carrot stew, found its way into several Chagall paintings and sketches; more generally, Chagall recalled in his art the traditional world of Lyozno, a small Jewish town (or *shtetl*) from which his parents had originated. Chagall was fascinated by the Jewish celebrations of holidays here, the physical appearance and traditions of the townsfolk, and the rich culture of its society. This was a "primitive" world quite distinct from the urbane European centres that Chagall would later inhabit — yet Lyozno never left him. In his art, Chagall painted rabbis, synagogues, cemeteries, elderly Jews, violins, and cows — all symbols of his homeland in the Pale of Settlement. His images of flying Jews, so predominant in many works, are explained by Harshav as a reference to *luftmenchn* or air people in classical Yiddish literature, meaning figures who are without work and live "on air" — lacking firm support from the ground (*Marc Chagall and his Times*, p. 61). This is also, clearly, a reference to the absence of a Jewish homeland. Harshav adds that Chagall made reference to the "wandering Jew" — an antisemitic notion of the rootless Jew that was nonetheless appropriated in modern Jewish literature as an expression of existential reality. Chagall identified strongly with this idea, because he continually struggled with a sense of who he was; indeed, as an adult he embraced three identities: Russian, French, and Jewish. Furthermore, in the 1930s and 1940s he never quite felt at ease in his adopted home of France and then the United States. Although decrying identity solely as a Jew, he struggled with his designation as a French citizen or as an American (and he spoke no English, which was a tremendous barrier). He did have powerful feelings of connection with Russia, but, after living in Vitebsk and Moscow during the revolutionary period, he left under attacks from the artistic left (from Malevich, for example) because his art was deemed not sufficiently avant-garde or proletarian. Chagall would not return until 1973 for a visit. (Of interest is the fact that *Marc Chagall and his Times* reveals new material on Chagall's role as a commissar of art during the Russian Revolution, when he clearly became caught up in the exhilarating promise of a workers' state and art for the people.)

Ultimately, argues Harshav, "All his life, Chagall felt like a provincial who wants to make it in the center. He absorbed the norms and ideals of that center; yet his strength lay in bringing to the center the marvelous, 'thick' world of his provincial past" (*Marc Chagall and his Times*, pp. 22–23). A unique aspect of Harshav's approach is to emphasize that, while Chagall drew upon "his provincial past", he did not accept the Jewish faith and he did not know much about Hasidism (and thus Hasidism was not a crucial influence upon him, although other biographers have stressed this). Still, he was marked by his Jewish consciousness. Even though he disliked being categorized as a Jewish artist, he once declared, "Yet it seems to me: If I were not a Jew (with the content I put into the word), I wouldn't have been an artist, or I would be a different artist altogether" (*Marc Chagall on Art and Culture*, p. 40). Throughout his life he maintained close ties with Yiddish writers in Russia, Palestine, and America. Finally, the letters of *Marc Chagall and his Times* reveal that

Chagall supported the idea of a Jewish art museum in Tel Aviv in the 1930s, commented repeatedly on the horrors of the Holocaust and on his despair over the suffering of Jews, and after the war defended Israel fiercely.

To Harshav, Chagall was a “typical child of the Modern Jewish Revolution”, meaning that Chagall was just one of many East European Jews who, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, left behind their religion and their small communities and sought to embrace modern culture and secular identities — either in the West or in Moscow (*Marc Chagall and his Times*, p. 8). Chagall’s art thus came to combine Jewish symbols, Jewish characters, and Jewish themes with the European avant-garde’s revolution in colour, form, and perspective from impressionism onward. Chagall came into contact with these changes during his years of study in Paris, from 1910 to 1914 and 1923 to 1941. He also lived and exhibited in Berlin in 1922 and 1923. This contact with avant-garde art, particularly in Paris, clearly influenced his work for the better; he would later argue that another Jewish artist, Max Liebermann — the German impressionist — had made a fatal mistake in not studying in France, for such experience would have heightened the quality of his painting to the level of the art of Monet or Pissarro.

Ultimately, Harshav’s two volumes provide a wealth of information on Chagall’s art, his identity, and his intersection with history and politics. We also learn some riveting details about his personal life and in particular his treatment of women during his three marriages to Berta Rosenfeld, Virginia Haggard, and Vava Brodsky. While he clearly adored women and was drawn to them (as is evident in his art), he is also revealed as a needy, demanding husband — unable to contribute as much to his marriages as he sought in return. His wives did everything to make his life comfortable: they cared for his household, wrote his letters, managed his money, and looked after his children (although this was not the case for Vava, who married Chagall when she was 47). Chagall’s neglect is most evident in the sad story of his second common-law wife, Virginia. From the letters she wrote to friends, included by Harshav in *Marc Chagall and his Times*, Virginia emerges as a vibrant, outgoing, and compassionate wife, often abandoned by her husband to fare on her own. When she became pregnant, for example, with their son David, Chagall left High Falls, New York (where they had a home after the war) for Paris and stayed there during her pregnancy and then childbirth because he could not bear to be witness to labour. Clearly, Chagall both loved and feared women. Virginia left him several years later, and Chagall’s pain and enormous anger pierce his letters to friends, as he depicts Virginia as a heartless traitor. He appears here in a rather unflattering light.

If we put aside these personal flaws, Chagall emerges in Harshav’s two volumes as a riveting and often sympathetic character of great talent and insight. What a fabulous read these two books by Harshav are! In the second volume, for example, Chagall explores the history of French painting (in an address of 1943 to Mount Holyoke College) and gives some revealing clues as to the meaning of his own art. “There are no stories in my pictures, no fairy tales, no popular legends,” he stresses.

For me a picture is a surface covered with representations of things (objects, animals, human beings) in a certain order in which logic and illustration have no importance. The

visual effect of the composition is what is paramount.... I have used cows, milkmaids, roosters, and provincial Russian architecture as a source of form because these are a part of the country from which I come and these things, without doubt, have left a deeper impression in my visual memory than all the other impressions I have received. (*Marc Chagall on Art and Culture*, pp. 78–79)

As this quotation shows, Chagall's personal reflections — on painting, on his life, and on the history that took place around him — are crucial for understanding his art. They are also fascinating sources for the historian, especially in addressing the revolutionary changes that affected East European Jews in the twentieth century.

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HELLER, Henry — *Anti-Italianism in Sixteenth-Century France*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003. Pp. 307.

Dans ce livre, Henry Heller soutient que, sous les derniers Valois, de nombreux Français se soulevèrent contre l'influence indue des Italiens dans les affaires économiques, financières, politiques et religieuses du royaume. Apparue d'abord dans les cercles humanistes, ce sentiment xénophobe gagna progressivement l'ensemble de la population française. Tous, qu'ils soient paysans, bourgeois, nobles, catholiques ou protestants, pouvaient avoir une bonne raison d'en vouloir aux péninsulaires. Il est vrai que ces derniers contrôlaient une partie importante du commerce français et que, par leurs banques, ils étaient devenus les créanciers les plus importants des rois de France. Cette situation privilégiée leur permettait d'obtenir des postes importants à la cour et dans la hiérarchie ecclésiastique. La xénophobie qui se développa à leur endroit joua donc, selon l'auteur, un rôle central dans les principaux événements des guerres civiles, notamment le massacre de la Saint-Barthélemy, les états-généraux de Blois de 1576–1577, la révolte de la Ligue et le triomphe final d'Henri IV. Selon Heller, si l'anti-italianisme n'était pas le thème dominant dans les controverses de l'époque — la religion et la politique y occupaient beaucoup plus de place —, « it certainly was an important sub-theme which can illuminate the central political and religious questions of the period. » (p. 19).

Le livre de Heller a le mérite de nous présenter une vision plus nuancée de la présence italienne en France à l'époque des Guerres de religion. Il a raison de noter que l'anti-italianisme est un sous-thème qu'il faut prendre davantage en considération lorsque l'on analyse la situation française de l'époque, même si on pourrait l'élargir pour parler d'une hostilité plus générale contre les étrangers, plutôt que de ne réserver cet état d'esprit qu'aux Italiens. On doit toutefois regretter que l'auteur oublie sa prudence initiale (« Anti-Italianism was by no means the dominant theme of late-sixteenth-century French history. Religion and politics were more important », p. 19) pour faire de ce sentiment l'explication unique permettant de comprendre les événements du temps.