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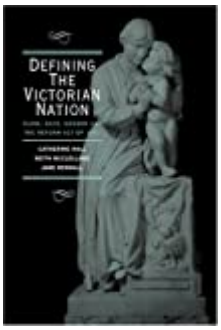

Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland, Jane Rendall. *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the British Reform Act of 1867.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. xiii + 303 pp. $36.99 (paper), ISBN 978-0-521-57653-6; $95.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-57218-7.

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1867 and All That

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The cover of this book presents Thomas Woolner's "Civilization" (or "The Lord's Prayer"), which now stands in Wallington, Northumberland. The sculpture illustrates a mother teaching her son the Lord's Prayer, the son standing on a pedestal decorated with a relief portraying barbarism in which another mother feeds her child with raw flesh on the point of his father's sword. The sculptor's comment on this work was that it was designed to "embody the civilization of England ... because the position of women in society always marks the degree to which the civilization of the nation has reached." It was an embodiment, as Hall, McClelland and Rendall observe, which was based on conceptions of gender roles, racial difference and inevitably, if implicitly, class relations. It is the working-through of such assumptions in exchanges over citizenship, nationhood and identity within the debates over parliamentary reform in the run up to what became the 1867 Reform Act, and in its immediate aftermath, which forms the focus of this volume.

The study is one of loose collaboration not collective authorship. There is a substantial introduction credited to all three authors, but the meat of the book lies in the three essays produced individually by the co-authors. These essays are presented as enriched by mutual discussion and exchange, but preserving the autonomy of the three projects. Indeed there are moments of overt and acknowledged disagreement between them. Keith McClelland's essay, "England's Greatness: The Working Man", looks at the dynamics of the emergence of a post-chartist radicalism which was–especially in its restrictive notions of qualification for the franchise–a marked departure from pre-1848 traditions of universal suffrage. He argues that at the heart of this shift were newly masculinised definitions of respectability, independence and class solidarity. Jane Rendall's chapter, "The Citizenship of Women and the Reform Act of 1867", is essentially a contribution to a revised narrative history of the early years of the suffrage movement, emphasising its complexity and the extent to which it must be considered on its own terms, in its own context, and not merely as a forerunner to the later Victorian movement. Catherine Hall concludes with "The Nation Within and Without", which considers 1866-67 as a moment in which a number of debates about race, rights and representation

(relating to Jamaica, Ireland, and the colonies, as well as to parliamentary reform in the United Kingdom) intersect. This happened in ways that illuminate the extent to which race had become an important marker of national identity, and of the boundary between citizen and subject. What draws the three essays together is a commitment to new modes of cultural history, especially a sense of the interplay of language and circumstance, and concern over how notions of citizenship and the franchise (which was intimately associated with it) were defined in terms of class, gender, and race.

All three contributions exceed the conventional bounds of an essay, stretching to between fifty and sixty pages (c. 25,000 words each), while the introduction goes even further, extending to seventy pages. The introduction provides a brief narrative of the passing of the Act, and a longer summary and discussion of the historiographical debates within which the authors seek to operate. The essays cover the "high politics" tradition, the Marxian tradition which attempts to make class central to the politics of the second reform act, and the new cultural histories of politics provided both by the "linguistic turn" historians and the history of political thought of such writers as Winch and Collini; at the same time they feature feminist history, especially as it discusses and transcends notions of separate spheres along with recent considerations of nations, nationalism, and postcolonialism. These discussions are extremely lucid and will provide a welcome guide to many, for I suspect few readers, however familiar they may be with much of this literature, will be able to claim the collective competence of the volume's co-authors. It might be said that they are too concerned with summary to allow the chapter to set a clear and unequivocal theoretical agenda for the essays which follow, though this in turn may merely reflect the theoretical tensions which undoubtedly persist between them. Even so, the discussions admirably emphasise that there is much more at issue in the passing of the 1867 act and the debates which accompanied it than questions over which stratum of respectable working-class men would be included within the franchise.

The introduction concludes with a useful section exploring the legal ambiguities, and limits, of the notion of British "citizenship" in the 1860s, via an examination of its use by John Stuart Mill. Mill is important because in him we are able to see a combination of a radical approach to the enfranchisement of women, arising out of what was in many respects a conventional enlightenment philosophy which was in no sense democratic. As the authors point out, except for a brief period between 1848-50, nineteenth-century Britain had no barriers to immigration and prided itself on this freedom; nonetheless, a strong sense of national and racial hierarchy led Mill to conclude that the wider citizenship which he sought for the United Kingdom was not to be extended to its colonial subjects.

In the first chapter, McClelland notes that debates over reform in the mid-1860s ostensibly over who ought to be granted the parliamentary vote were centrally about redefining "what the political nation was and might become" (p. 71). This issue was not confined to politics, but crucial also to wider debates about British culture and civilisation. In contemporary debates, such as the nature of the Hyde Park demonstration of July 1866, questions of who could claim respectability, and how such a claim could be demarcated socially, were fundamental and often driven by notions of masculinity. Hence, McClelland argues, the importance of Bright in the reform agitation was not merely his rhetorical style, but the way in which his platform performances linked the claim to enfranchisement with questions of working-class taxation and consumption. Men enduring the heavy burdens of taxes on tobacco and paper deserved a voice in the imposition of such taxes. It was not that longstanding arguments based on natural rights disappeared, but that they were increasingly overlain by justifications based on merit (arguments which ceased to be applied to all working men and could be deployed to include some and exclude others). The vote was deserved by those who were respectable and who laboured to produce the goods on which the country's greatness was based. The vote was to be denied, however, not just to the residuum, but also to women. As McClelland puts it "the deep structures of the reform movement in both its ideas and practice effectively restricted the claim to the vote to both men and a masculinised popular politics" (p. 97). Indeed the two restrictions were linked to the extent that central to the image of the respectable workingman was his place as head of a model family unit; to be husband and father was to have character, and that ability to provide for them denoted independence. As McClelland puts it, "Virtue became attached, not least, to the cultivation of domesticity in which a man was independent and respectable by means of being able to maintain a dependent wife and children within the household" (pp. 100-101). There was still a claim from class for the vote; but also a claim that the widening of the franchise would help expunge class differences.

But McClelland seeks to go further, arguing that these shifts cannot be seen as purely discursive, and

must–notwithstanding the recent linguistic turn–be traced in part to social and economic changes. These include the "shifting composition of the working class consequent on the consolidation of the industrial revolution" (p. 102) which brought an intensified gender differentiation of the labor force, the shift of men into higher-paid occupations and a widening gap between skilled and unskilled. There was also a growing importance of a new matrix of working-class and masculine associations, especially trade unions, but also co-ops, friendly societies and workingmen's clubs. As a result, whether examined through local cases (McClelland focuses briefly on North East England) or national organisations such as the National Reform League, what marks the new phase is the new centrality of the unions, along with greater acceptance of the permanence of industrial capitalism and new values of work.

There are problems here. At times there is a tendency for the argument to out-run the evidence presented. Many of the most interesting propositions remain assertions. There is, for example, little or no evidence of explicit formulations of notions that "the concerns of popular politics [were] very largely the concern of the *man and work*" (p. 116). Nor is it clear how far McClelland has been able to reinsert social and economic forces into his account, as he promised. Much of the section entitled "Social change and politics" in fact rests on ideological rather than social factors, including the new sense of the permanence of capitalism, shifting valuations of work and its meanings involving an acceptance of the market determination of labouŕÃs rewards. It is also argued that above all a shift from the belief in "the political as the overdetermining element in the social order" to the belief that politics was "no longer the prime *determining* force but rather an essentially *intrusive* one which ought to be separated from economic and social activities" became crucial (p. 115). Not enough attention is given to the relationship between claims made and positions adopted for purely strategic reasons, such as acceptance of an extension of the franchise to the "respectable working man," and the evolution of such strategies into fundamental beliefs, that universal manhood suffrage would be undesirable.

Jane Rendall's essay, while shifting the focus to the campaign for women's suffrage, is also concerned with questions of strategy and belief. Her primary purpose, as she articulates it, is to call into question the traditional historiographical picture of "a movement progressing from small beginnings to final success" (p. 119), seeking to uncover "a much more complex history," not least for the various countries of the United Kingdom. A large part of this complexity derives from the ways in which the campaigns for women's suffrage proceeded on grounds which while including some within the pale of citizenship, also sought to exclude others. Of the three contributions, RendalÌÃs is the most narrative ("a highly provisional one," as she puts it), providing a potted history of the earlier calls for votes for women from Wollstonecraft to 1865, drawing on the older work of Helen Blackburn as well as more recent scholarship of Barbara Caine, Katheryn Gleadle and others. This is then developed into the first detailed modern account of the movement from the mid-1860s to 1870, resting on a wide reading of contemporary magazines, newspapers and suffrage correspondence.

It would be difficult and unfruitful to attempt a summary of Rendall's narrative, and it is a little easier to identify specific themes. Rendall is concerned to understand the suffrage movement not simply as a movement of embattled women, but also as comprising a complex range of alignments and alliances between women and men, its emergence in the mid-60s both "woman centred" and part of a "liberalism exuberant" (p. 129). Her account of the campaigns around the run-up to the reform act emphasises the very different traditions and aspirations which different localities brought to what scarcely became a "national" movement in any meaningful sense. It also indicates that despite a favourable conjunction of events, levels of support–even if sufficient to surprise and delight many contemporary campaigners–remained low. Hence, despite its ultimate failure, the shift of attention towards getting women voters placed on the electoral roll, and then in support of moves to enfranchise women in municipal elections, represented a realism about the immediate prospects of legislative action on the parliamentary franchise. Even if, as Rendall demonstrates, such pragmatic diversions did help to fuel tensions within the movement which hardened around 1870 into a damaging organisational fracturing which persisted until the end of the century, these should not be blamed for the lack of progression of these years. Although by 1870 the early suffrage movement had gained more than could possibly have been expected in 1866, this was largely as a result of its moderation and a favourable conjunction of circumstances (which dwindled after 1870) with the rise of the influence of trade unionism within Liberalism and the greater influence of the implacably hostile Gladstone.

Through the course of this account, the broader themes broached by the introduction and the other es-

says are largely kept at arm's length, a reflection, interestingly, of the instincts of some of the leaders of the movement in the 1860s. Indeed the comment of Emily Davies in August 1866 that the womenîÃs suffrage issue was coming to be seen too much as a crotchet of Mill's ("we get mixed up in the public mind with Jamaica and the Reform League, which does us no good" [p.133]) remains instructive. Rendall's final section, "Defining women's citizenship," reconnects this material to the rest of the volume. As their private exchanges revealed, many (women and men) believed in equality between the sexes, in a "humanity suffrage" (p. 161). But in public, campaigners "compromised according to the tactical needs of the moment," drawing on mainstream political languages and ideas, and in doing so "placed suffragist movements within a long individualist tradition of male radicalism." In this the vote was "constituted as a moral responsibility" which had at its centre the implicit exclusion of all married women. It also tended to involve notions of culture and cultivation which had equally powerful exclusionary implications. "Liberal arguments for women's suffrage tended to erect barriers against the uneducated, both men and women" (p. 169). Many shared Mill's distrust of democracy and supported, for example, calls for an educational franchise. Yet, despite the huge costs, this approach did not establish common ground between the radical and womenîÃs movements. At the same time, Rendall notes that some women did manage to move beyond the traditional radical position, reworking notions of women's mission beyond traditional philanthropic modes towards broader concepts of social responsibility. From this it was possible to argue that women's enfranchisement could enhance public spirit in national life, bring new understanding of the problems of the poor, and thus had an appeal beyond rights.

Imperial concerns play a relatively small role here, although they were clearly in play in discussions of responses to Governor Eyre, and in attempts to invoke traditions of ancient Germanic practices of women's participation to echo the radical invocation of the Anglo-Saxon constitution. They loom much larger in Catherine Hall's chapter, which "locates the imagined nation of 1867 within a wider frame of empire" (p. 179). In many ways this is a much more ambitious piece than the other two. While McClelland works within existing trajectories, and Rendall seeks, as it were, to retool an ageing literature, Hall wishes to "question existing historiographical paradigms" and open up new ways of thinking about the British "nation."

Hall notes that whereas in the later twentieth century citizenship came to be legally defined by stipulations about parentage and birthplace, which have clear racial overtones, in the mid-nineteenth century the badge of citizenship was the vote. Yet the suggestion is that the settlement of 1867, along with contemporaneous settlements in Jamaica and Canada "can be read as formally differentiating black Jamaicans from white British, white Canadians or white Australians" (p. 182). In doing so this created a "racially and ethnically differentiated map of nation and empire" that was "part of the imagined world of nineteenth-century British men and women" (p. 183). In this sense the conjunction in 1867 of debates over enfranchisement, representation and political violence in Jamaica, Ireland and Britain, along with the publication of three important texts (Carlyle's "Shooting Niagara," Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*, and J. S. Mill's *England and Ireland*)–part of whose purpose was to consider these inter-relationships–encouraged and illustrated the interrelationship of the issues.

Hall traces a crucial shift in attitudes to race from the essentially benign and paternalistic view of negroes as the objects of anti-slavery in the interests of a common humanity (which marked the 1840s) to the clear sense of racial difference and hierarchies. This was a position increasingly sustained by the logic of the liberal position–as in the case of Jamaica–by the 1860s. In this sense, Hall discusses Jamaica, Ireland and the debates over the franchise in 1867 as three "site[s] for experimentation over the relation between 'race' and forms of political representation" (p. 204).

Even those who might continue to be identified as "pro-negro" lost their confidence before a vision of an emancipated black peasantry. Hall, who has already considered the Governor Eyre episode in Jamaican history in *White, Male and Middle Class*, returns to it as an instance of this shift, noting that after the Royal Commission it was increasingly the radicals who attempted to push matters towards a prosecution. The general backlash against the prosecution of Eyre demonstrated that by 1867 the middle-class conscience was quite able to reconcile its liberalism with the need to maintain authority over the potentially barbarous negro. As such, Hall argues, this needs to be understood as part of an enduring process whereby political identities were established in relation to racial "others."

Her second case study takes up ideas concerning the central importance of the Irish "other" in the formation of Englishness which have been much debated in the past two decades, not least by Mary Poovey in her work on

James Kay's study of the Manchester working classes in 1832 with which Hall begins. For example, there is a long history of constructing the Irish as sub-normal, and this had an enduring impact on the possibilities for English-Irish co-operation during the Chartist period, and thereafter, with one strand of popular politics being dominated by the kind of sectarianism which fuelled the Murphy riots. Hence, "in the imagined nation as it was reconstituted in 1867, 'Paddy', the racialised Irishman, stood as a potent 'other' to the respectable Englishman, who had proved his worth and deserved a vote" (p. 220).

Hall successfully demonstrates the persistence of similar assumptions within the apparently quite distinct debates over Eyre, immigration and the Reform Bill. They are similar in the sense of the shared operation of a double–if not a triple–standard, in which pervading assumptions about race and citizenship could underpin an extension of the franchise in Britain. This might simultaneously sanction both an abolition of representative government in Jamaica and the extension of responsible government in British North America into a new Canadian nation. What she does not quite so readily demonstrate are the vectors of this relationship, in particular whether ideas established in racial debates were then deployed and had an impact on the conceptualisation of other questions. It might even be suggested that apparently trans-racial prejudices (such as those against the migrating poor) did consciously and deliberately discriminate against the Irish.

Readers of such a volume, which undoubtedly contains material all three authors intend to develop into more substantial published form, can reasonably ask a number of questions. In particular, does the enterprise work as a form or mode of scholarship? It is difficult to see the inner workings of the collaboration or the degree of mutual enrichment that occurred. Even so, there is an underlying sense that the three proceed along relatively discrete paths, influenced by different literatures, ultimately concerned with quite different questions. Given the conceptual centrality awarded the question of citizenship, it would have been extremely useful to see a more sustained collective discussion of its operation, with respect, say, to notions of "character" which Collini has explored so effectively. The extra space provided by a dedicated volume is not always deployed to best advantage, and in at least two of the essays encourages a broad narrative approach which leaves some sense of divided purpose. It would be too unkind to suggest that the whole is less than the sum of its parts, and certainly the juxtaposition does illuminate the richness of the rhetorical and ideological linkages between debates in, at first sight, relatively disparate fields. Nevertheless, for this reviewer, perhaps in part because much of the material re-worked here has appeared in published form in various guises through the 1990s, it was not easy to identify what new ways of thinking had been opened up by the collection.

In many respects this is a text admirably suited to undergraduates and junior postgraduates. It takes very little for granted (the notion of "coloureds," for example, is defined on at least two different occasions), and provides extremely lucid accounts of a range of significant movements and episodes. Various textbook-like appendices are provided, including a long series of short biographical introductions, summaries of the terms of the 1832 and 1867 Reform Acts, and various other tables outlining the nature of the political system in these years. The volume is relatively generously, if conventionally, illustrated with line drawings from the *Illustrated London News* and cartoons from *Punch*. That said, as some of the more favourable responses to the volume already published indicate, it may also in retrospect prove to be an important stage in the development of a new cultural political history of the nineteenth century (and others), which takes us beyond some of the sterile debates generated by the "linguistic turn" in the 1990s.

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