

monarchy of the late nineteenth century there were more female migrants than male ones, at least within her study groups. Here too, her examples indicate that small cities were the primary location for this kind of work. In part because of this, women outnumbered men in most cities (some industrial centers forming exceptions). Rising through the ranks of household service often involved moving to more distant locations, and over time it included larger numbers of married women, including some mothers, who would leave their families in other locations for extended periods of time. In this, Hahn illustrates that “transnational motherhood”, a literature she does not engage and which has captured attention recently, has a history that considerably predates the late twentieth century. Hahn argues, though, that that pattern of moving longer distances being associated with more qualified labor does not apply to all occupations. Her research on male metalworkers shows significant local recruitment.

In general, Hahn argues that regional labor markets varied significantly according to industry, gender, qualifications, and region. To what degree those findings might be specific to Habsburg lands remains open. Ethnicity does not disappear here, whether taking the form of a fear of all things French or a proclivity to hire crews from Italy. It does, however, become one of several factors. In any case, Hahn offers a solid example and theses for others to explore, and an important gender corrective to studies of migration.

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TWELLS, ALISON. *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle Class, 1792–1850. The ‘Heathen’ at Home and Overseas.* Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke [etc.] 2009. xiv, 353 pp. Ill. £55.00; doi:10.1017/S0020859009990502

Alison Twells’s book on missionary culture and the English middle class in the early nineteenth century is an important addition to the growing literature on how the relationship between Britain and its empire actually worked. Twells has probed deeply into the structure, the rhetoric, and the dynamic of missionary culture in this period and one of the many strengths of her book is its focus on the provincial roots and basis of this culture. Sheffield is the center of Twells’s attention where, as in many of the northern towns, a vibrant and growing urban middle class was animated by the evangelical movement of the 1790s to fuel and fund missionary outreach to the “heathen” both at home and abroad. Twells’s story is how that missionary movement developed throughout the first half of the nineteenth century to define the discourse of Britain’s responsibility to bring “civilizing” influences to bear on the world.

This is, of course, a story that will be familiar to many. It builds not only the Catherine Hall’s earlier work, and similarly titled, *Civilising Subjects*, but also upon Linda Colley’s equally well-known, and seminal study of how British imperial culture was forged in the eighteenth century. Twells’s contribution is that she both modifies and complicates some of the key themes around which British historiography currently revolves. In particular, her book is a major study of the components of middle-class identity and culture in this period, and of how we may understand the relationship between the domestic and the imperial in the making of British history.

Missionary culture was one of the most important components of middle-class identity in the nineteenth century. Twells provides one of the best and most closely documented

accounts of how the structures that composed that culture emerged. But missionary culture was only one of a series of overlapping and interrelated spheres of cultural and social activity for the urban middle class from the 1790s. The many varieties of philanthropic enterprise, from ragged schools to Mechanics' Institutes, the extremely important temperance movement and its prolific cultural and social outgrowths, the social and political movements that went under the umbrella of "reform", and, hardly least, the vibrant religious organizations that provided the most common cement to all the others, all fed into the "identity" of the middle class as it entered the nineteenth century.

Underpinning this variegated socio-cultural landscape of the middle-class presence, however, was the notion of personal reformation through changes in culture and individual behavior. The distinctive value of this belief was the role it accorded to culture the process of societal development. Thus, the well-known thrust of social reformation in Britain was to change the culture of the uncivilized sections of the population through a variety of missionary-like initiatives, such as the domestic visiting societies that began to appear in the first years of the century. In this belief system there was no difference between the uncivilized parts of Britain and the uncivilized parts of the rest of the world. On the more optimistic side, the belief in the equality of human debasement was mirrored by the belief in a universal humanity. Culture – in this case, conversion through the word of God – was just as capable of redeeming the Polynesians of the South Pacific, where the first generation of London Missionary Society missionaries ventured in the late 1790s, as it was of reforming the inhabitants of the Mendips, where Hannah More concentrated her efforts at the same time. For the founding generation of this foreign and domestic missionary culture in the 1790s there was no difference between the heathen abroad and the heathen at home. Both were in dire need of the superior knowledge that could come from Christian belief and its accompanying behaviors. Conversion was the key step to civilizing at home or abroad.

Twells tracks how these premises of missionary culture emerged in the first decade or so of the nineteenth century, found expression in the various activities of Sheffield activists, faced off the challenges to its precepts that emerged from the early 1830s, and remained largely pre-eminent as the dominant discourse of racial ideology until the 1850s. The most original and interesting part of the book is where Twells treats the tensions and contradictions within the belief system of missionary culture. For the values of missionary culture were never unchallenged. The specter of racial essentialism was always present. In the 1820s, for example, racial essentialism found support from the new medical sciences, such as phrenology, which pointed to cranial size as the measure of civilization. But too much should not be made of that. As Twells argues, it was possible for missionary culture to hold fast to its faith in a universal humanity well into the 1850s. Indeed, the most serious challenge to missionary culture in the 1830s and 1840s came from those who questioned the link between liberal political economy and the progress of civilization. Tory paternalists and Chartist alike asked what was "progressive" about consigning the British worker to market forces and reserving all human sympathy for the slaves of the empire who were about to be thrown into the same maelstrom.

But the most important aspect of Twells's book is the way it illuminates and complicates the treatment of the mutually constitutive dynamic between Britain and its empire. It is now a commonplace for British historians to argue that empire has played a determinant role in Britain's history. Too little attention has been given, however, to describing how that relationship may be seen in action. Thus, the field was wide open to receive the rollicking, roustabout attack on such a notion by Bernard Porter in his fiercely empirical

and provocatively polemical book, *The Absent Minded Imperialists*. Porter spent a great deal of effort and time poking holes in the idea that British culture and British people were impregnated with an awareness or sense of empire in the nineteenth century. Twells is not to be compared to Porter. But in her quieter and systematic way, she adds a welcome and constructive set of complications to this question.

Thus, a key problem for missionary culture in Britain was the fit between the missionary experience in empire and the narrative of that experience in the domestic culture. From the beginning of the missionary enterprise, it was clear that the expectations that evangelical culture created of successful conversions and the steady growth of civilized habits of behavior was not going to be fulfilled. This created a disjunctive tension between missionary work as it really was and the aspirations for its achievements at home. Thus, from the beginning accounts of missionary work were carefully edited for domestic consumption. And a gentle and largely unacknowledged shifting of the paradigm of expectations was set in train. In other words, the image of empire that was projected through missionary culture was an invented image that owed more to the dynamics of domestic British society than it did to the imperial project. Missionary culture in Britain was less a reflection of the dynamic of empire, then; it was more a site for the display and assertion of a narrative of middle-class cultural, social and political identity. In this respect, one might say, empire was a profoundly *domestic* thing and served as a rhetorical device that was pressed into the service of the needs of particular segments of British society.

But the narrative of the missionary culture that is the subject of Twells's book *was* intimately connected with the narrative of empire in one extremely important way. Twells's main focus is on the growth and establishment of the missionary culture that emerged from the 1790s. She does a good job of describing that culture as a socio-cultural force, underpinned by the religious precepts of the evangelical revival. She ends at the moment when this way of rationalizing Britain's imperial relationship with subject peoples was about to give way to the "scientific racism" of the later part of the century. But core precepts of early nineteenth century missionary culture continued to make significant contributions to the imperial enterprise. Most importantly, the idea that the civilizing power of redemption through Christianity was a special duty of the British remained as the main public, ideological justification for the British empire from the mid-nineteenth century until its demise a century later. Thus, even though the ideology of racial difference exchanged its belief in a universal humanity for one of essentialized racism from the later 1850s onward, the justification for empire continued to be softened by the vocabulary and rhetoric of the civilizing mission as a duty and a sacrifice. In this way the legacy of those earnest and worthy men and women who form the subject of Twells's research lived on well beyond their time.

Richard Price

JUNG, MOON-HO. *Coolies and Cane. Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2006. x, 275 pp. Ill. \$25.00; doi:10.1017/S0020859009990514

The title might distract us from the very important point this book is making. Its real subject pertains to the tensions between the American ideal of free immigration and citizenship versus the realities of the labour market looking for cheap labour abroad, and