

CSSH NOTES

Etel Solingen, ed., *Scientists and the State: Domestic Structures and the International Context* (University of Michigan Press, 1994).

In this collection of essays, readers can get a sense of the character and history of science policy, the organization of scientific communities, and relations between scientists and the state in nine countries. The volume's editor, Etel Solingen, provides an introduction to orient the discussions which follow. She defines the concern of the collection as "the impact of state structures and state involvement in the international political and economic systems on the domestic political economy of science" (p. 3). Solingen's essay draws on a wide range of literatures, including recent work on the political sociology of the state, research in institutional political economy, and—of course—on the history of science policy. Contributors to the book make an effort to work broadly within the framework which Solingen outlines, though clearly none feels bound by it.

Most of the nations one would expect to find in such a volume are covered—several Western European countries, the United States, and Japan. China and the former Soviet Union are each the focus of a chapter, and we get an introduction to the social organization of science in countries often neglected in social studies of science: India, Israel, and Brazil. I found Ashok Kapur's piece on India particularly interesting. Kapur nicely describes the overlap and integration of the political and science elites in India and their role in shaping politics, science, and economic development strategy in that country.

In a collection of this sort, one might have expected essays on some countries that are not included. Given its historically central economic and scientific role, the absence of a chapter on Great Britain is surprising. The volume would have benefited as well from at least one essay on a newly industrializing country from the Pacific Rim—a region of increasing international economic importance.

The most frequent shortcoming of essays in the book, understandable in essays that attempt to be simultaneously short and panoramic, is the making of causal assertions in the absence of explicit empirical support or theoretical justification. The very general character of these essays means that this volume is probably not for area specialists. But though they lack the kind of detail that would interest specialists, for readers with only passing knowledge of the countries discussed, this book is well worth the read.

———Daniel Lee Kleinman

Sanford E. Schram, *Words of Welfare: the Poverty of Social Science and the Social Science of Poverty* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

At a time of major policy changes for dealing with the poor in the United States, this book offers a critical look at the basis of social science research on poverty. The author focuses on the extent to which existing welfare policies perpetuate the problems of poverty. Schram argues that current poverty research and policy initiatives are focused on regulating the poor and are geared towards finding the right incentive that will alter poor people's behavior. This focus on the behavior of the poor as the cause of poverty overlooks the impact that constraining structures have on contemporary poverty trends.

Schram argues that current poverty research focuses on empirical findings on individuals without paying adequate attention to their social and structural context. The author also argues that there is a false objectivity in social science research and that current poverty research overlooks the extent to which it is product of the political process. Schram calls for a "bottom-up" perspective which would focus on the consequences that the welfare system has for poor people, or the consequences for those at the bottom. In contrast, current poverty research is conducted from the perspective of the consequences that poor people have for the political economy and is primarily concerned with reducing dependence on the state. Rather than assisting those eligible for support in receiving aid, our current system is more interested in preventing those who are ineligible from receiving support.

Using these main themes, Schram discusses several important topics, including the setting of the poverty line, homelessness, the "underclass," the feminization of poverty, and welfare dependence. While these topics have received substantial attention in the past, Schram's bottom-up approach and focus on perspective, position and discourse provide an important alternative examination of these topics. In addition, critical topics for current poverty debates that have not received as much attention are also discussed. Among these is the trend towards the privatization of assistance. While declines in welfare benefits have been well documented, little attention has focused on one consequence of this decline—the establishment of an elaborate network of substitute services, often involving private aid. While private aid provides some assistance to the poor, it is an inadequate substitute to what was previously available to them. Additionally, this private aid often serves the interests of corporations rather than the poor. Schram uses the example of food banks to effectively argue this point. Also provided is a much-needed and timely discussion of the implications of trying to use welfare policies developed during industrialization for dealing with post-industrial poverty and the implications of living in an increasingly competitive global economy for existing policies. In a political climate emphasizing workfare, the inability of the current economy to provide all its citizens with full employment providing a family wage is lost in debates focusing on dependency.

Although Schram provides a wonderful discussion of what is wrong with existing research and policy, more attention could have been given to how to do things right. While *Words of Welfare* ends by providing a list of what more appropriate bottom-up reforms might mean: “It might mean tying income support to uses that are more consistent with middle-class concerns. . . . It might mean tying income support to uses that not only meet a family’s immediate needs but also are investments in a future of self-sufficiency. . . . It might mean promoting programs aimed specifically at the poor. . . . It might mean recognizing the need to create more subsidized jobs. . . . It might mean reducing the workweek without reducing wages. . . . It might mean accepting the necessity of a guaranteed income. . . . It might mean reinvesting in communities. . . . It might mean leaving welfare alone and restoring funding for schools in poor neighborhoods, improving job training.” An improvement would be one or more additional chapter(s) to discuss these reforms in more detail and to focus on how they might work. Even without this additional discussion, *Words of Welfare* provides an important and timely critique of poverty research and policy efforts and refocuses our attention on the poor, in a political climate in which concern over dependence has replaced poverty as the policy objective.

———Rukmalie Jayakody

William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel* (Cambridge University Press).

This book makes a significant contribution both to the growing body of interdisciplinary scholarship examining the sources and the tropes of British *fin de siècle* anxieties about progress, science and social control, and to our understanding of the novels that engage in the debates on these issues. Greenslade, a lecturer in Literary Studies at the University of the West of England, Bristol, focuses on degeneration, an idea that can be traced to the mid-nineteenth-century French psychiatrist, Benedict August Morel, which gained considerable popularity and legitimacy through the work of Max Nordau, Henry Maudsley, and others in the 1890s and the first decades of the twentieth century.

The discourse of degeneration sought to explain the paradox of the gap between the rhetoric of progress and the “evidence on the ground” of poverty and degradation especially in the cities. Its emphasis on heredity and the biological basis for class differences and criminality spoke to middle-class fears of the masses and of contagion and infection. Greenslade explores the “interaction at a particular phase in European history of the culture of the city, psychological medicine and Darwinian natural selection [which] authorized a specialization of the discourse of degeneration not known before.” He argues that, though psychoanalysis was eventually decisive in undermining the credibility of degenerationism, there is nevertheless a line of descent from the *fin de siècle* academic debates about degeneration in Britain Europe and America to the Holocaust.

The book is scrupulously researched and makes excellent use of a diverse body of work. Elegantly written, its lucidity makes it a pleasure to read. But its chief usefulness lies in its illuminating discussion of a group of novelists within the frame constructed by these discourses. Indebted to Foucault's ideas about how power is disseminated through many and varied institutions and contexts, Greenslade shows how degeneracy gets used to produce typologies of inclusion and exclusion. But he highlights one of the limitations of Foucault for the literary critic by insisting on Frank Kermode's distinction between myth and fiction, which sees in fiction a greater openness and an emphasis on "finding things out" rather than on inscribing hegemonic "truths." This approach allows fiction the possibility of being an agent of change, and it is a salutary one to take with the novels Greenslade discusses here. In excellent chapters on Hardy, Conrad, Gissing, Forster, and Woolf, Greenslade provides the crucial terms of the debate they were drawing on in order to interrogate the authority with which the discourse of degeneration enforced its view of the world and the effect it had on characters deemed unfit.

Degenerationism legitimated an already deeply entrenched fear of art since, generally, "the appeal of scientific medical and psychological teaching was to render 'art' profoundly suspect since art was itself deemed to be a source of instability and disorientation in the modern world." Recognizing that these writers, particularly Woolf, felt themselves to be targets of the medical establishment's coercive power allows Greenslade a generous reading of their own ambivalence toward the masses. His thorough and nuanced analyses of the novels do them and us a real service.

—Christina Root