

that has been employed by academic historians over the past 40-odd years shuns figurative use, drains energy and color from words, and hides the affection and obscures the passion of its authors. At its worst, it becomes an extraordinary repression, an exercise in unnatural constraint, of holding back, of corsetting mind and emotion. One almost cries out to writers — be yourself, fill your paragraphs with life, jettison this procrustean bed of stifled expression. You will not prostitute yourself by confiding in us your love of your characters or your subject. We can still discern truth from falsity when you speak with conviction and feeling.

Sensing some of these problems, Axelrod tries hard, and sometimes succeeds, in breathing energy into his tale by exploiting the anecdotal and biographical record. But the full resolution of this issue will not come until the language of academic historians is released from the bondage of an outmoded and unemotive convention.

Axelrod shows that students valued "approachable," "interesting," and "dedicated" teachers and devalued those who "lacked empathy" or "lectured prosaically" (p. 95). Much more needs to be said about this central relationship in universities (in fact, whole chapters should be written on it), but I strongly suspect that in the analogous writer-reader relationship readers cherish the same qualities.

With fully 100 pages devoted to appendices, notes, and index, this book lacks little regarding sources and methodology. The volume simultaneously enhances our understanding of several related histories — of youth, women, class, and the depression. It is a worthy *substantive* beginning to the history of students in higher education.

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Burtch, B. (1992). *The sociology of law: Critical approaches to social control*. Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 223 pp., \$24.95 (softcover).

In this book Burtch has created a unique publication which is appropriately delimited in scope and, as the subtitle "Critical Approaches to Social Control" suggests, deals in a critical way with important issues with regard to the sociology of law. The book is a recent and welcome addition to the slowly growing library related to the sociology of law-related publications in Canada.

A quick glance at the table of contents of the book will reveal much diversity in the book's 10 chapters. However, this is not a problem since there are unifying themes which tie the different sections together. For instance, there is

the overarching theme of how the elements of social order, social conflict, coercion, and domination are expressed through law. Also, there is the major theme of the book which explicates the disparity between the "living law" and the idealized formal law. Moreover, there are the specific, contemporary themes of "the growth of feminism and feminist jurisprudence; the struggles for human rights and an end to some of the more blatant forms of discrimination; national and international forces that contributed to systems of injustice (or movement toward justice); changes in the nature of the family, as well as family law and divorce law; and the politics of the criminal sanction" (p. vii). The book's coherence results not only from the skillful concatenation of themes but also from the scholarly blending of theory and contemporary research. For example, in chapter 5 Burtch reviews the pathetic case of the wrongful conviction of Donald Marshall. Burtch extracts the key events of this case from the book, *Justice Denied: The Law versus Donald Marshall*, written by my fellow Newfoundland, Michael Harris. Upon reviewing the events of the Marshall case, Burtch, in an attempt to aid the reader in understanding this instance of a gross miscarriage of justice, applies three levels of sociological analysis to the case: the macrosocial level, the subcultural level, and the labelling perspective.

Clarity and readability are two of the finest features of this book. Although this is a text dealing with legal issues, there is no attempt on Burtch's part to intimidate the reader through wordy legal jargon. As well, since this text is directed to a nonlegal audience, in the first three chapters Burtch provides a more than adequate legal basis for understanding the issues in subsequent chapters. In chapter 1, for instance, the reader is sensitized to the many sociological perspectives from which the sociology of law may be viewed. These perspectives are then brought into a clearer focus in chapter 2 by an extraction of the relevant socio-legal writings of the grand classical theorists: Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. In spite of the fact that some sociologists feel that a Marxist sociology of law is not possible because of the subtlety of Marx's analysis of the law, Burtch tends to emphasize that Marx linked, in an inextricable way, legal equality to the organization of the means of production. Like Marx, Weber held the view that law and the economy are closely linked; however, Weber gave much thought to the rationalization of decision making through bureaucracy. Durkheim, on the other hand, placed his greatest emphasis on the relationship between repressive justice and social solidarity. These differing views, as well as others held by the classical theorists, are clearly delineated by Burtch and are used as a backdrop against which contemporary social conflicts are viewed in chapter 3.

Consistent with the effective organization of the book is the direct method of information presentation. Legal issues are identified, discussed, and tersely summarized. In addition, the helpful notes, study questions, and extensive bibliography of primary and secondary sources at the end of each chapter make

this book very valuable for students new to the field. It provides a comprehensive introduction to the field of the sociology of law.

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Lang, B. (1991). *Writing and the moral self*. New York: Routledge, 179 pp., \$17.50 (softcover).

This book is top drawer. Its underlying theme is both important and elusive: important in that the author seeks to bridge a long-standing gap between two kinds of essay writing; elusive in that he leaves to the reader the task of deciding whether or not the gap has been bridged. Following a brief description of both approaches (whose respective supporters tend to be highly critical of one another), he sets out in a series of essays to explore the territory between them. Thus, Lang assumes that readers will be able to detect the differences and overlaps through past experience with the existing forms.

His aim is for a "middle ground between the technical abstraction of 'learned' discourse designed to win a permanent foothold on a frictionless surface, and the consumable writing of journalism meant to glow and to disappear almost simultaneously" (p. 1). Contrasting the pitfalls of the two essay forms, it is his contention that "even the hardest facts cannot be too hard to be human," and that "even for the freest, most independent self, history is inescapable" (p. 2). In effect, he takes direct aim at yet another form of dualism, a kind of "Archie Bunker" mentality that tends to paralyse both writers and readers, "seeking instead a medium at once transparent and subservient that would not speak for itself but would do only as it was told" (p. 2). It is from such a backdrop that these essays illustrating the subtle relationships between language and ethics must be read. The 19 essays tend to follow a semiotic progression (syntaxics, semantics, and pragmatics).

The first section, "The Ethics of Language," includes "Grammar as Morality," wherein Lang suggests that good writing tends to be judged primarily in terms of instrumental value, often at the expense of, or even discounting the fact that, writing can be good in and of itself. In another chapter, "Pre-literacy, Post-literacy, and the Cunning of History," he examines the prevailing view that literacy is an endpoint, that the only possible hope the preliterate people have if they expect to arrive at the endpoint is to divest themselves of their own rich culture. In a third chapter he deals with "The Rights of Black English" in which Lang suggests that language at its best must be "truthful, open, direct, sincere—not evasive or obscure or misleading" (p.36). He parallels two approaches to religion, one from a journal of sociology written in the academic passive style,