

these circumstances it is impossible to identify an active student movement.

On graduation, the university generation of the 1930s swelled the ranks of the middle class of professionals and businessmen either directly or indirectly through female reproductive labour. Since a significant proportion eventually ended up as members of central Canada's corporate elite, the contribution of university education to upward mobility and regional disparity must be acknowledged, though Axelrod concludes it was still less important than inherited family membership in the upper class.

As a starting point this study has some merit but the gaping holes in content and analysis seem to suggest that the author wearied of his subject long before he could bring it to fruition. Without a sustained argument or a very clear focus—sometimes it is the student, sometimes the professor, sometimes segments of society beyond the university gates—the book lacks a sense of purpose. The general level at which Axelrod operates precludes a discussion of individual experiences except obliquely, and suggests that studies centred on one university or several closely related ones, which provide scope for more detail and analysis, are still very much needed if we are to understand more fully educational trends, youth in crisis, and higher education's contribution to class formation.

Judith Fingard
Dalhousie University

Lawrence A. Cremin. *Popular Education and Its Discontents.* New York: Harper & Row, 1990.

Historical *writing* is bound by the historian's repertoire of story forms; historical *reading* is bound by the audience's repertoire of narrative resources and sophistication about the kinds of stories historians tell. Historical *writing* is an act done by an historian for some particular audience, some particular community of discourse; historical *reading*, in Hans Robert Jauss's evocative terms, is determined by that audience's "horizon of expectations" or "horizon of understanding." From this perspective, misreadings of histories occur when there is a lack of fit or a bad fit between the historian-writer's text and the "horizon of expectations" or "horizon of understanding" of his/her audience. Such lack of fit occurred between the late Lawrence Cremin's *American Education* and its audience, that is to say, its audience of historian-reviewers.

Cremin was a passionate defender of American public education. Reading Cremin's oeuvre, one is struck by his faith in and commitment to public education, formal and informal, and to the idea of progress and the inevitable triumph of democracy through public education and the public's education. Few historians of education today are so optimistic: Cremin's version of the history of American education is criticized as "celebratory," "too optimistic," and as a "story of consensus rather than conflict."

The rhetorical mode in which Cremin emplotted his three-volume masterpiece, *American Education*, is that of Comedy/Romance, the "celebration of the quest." Although *not* uncritical of the course of American education, Cremin could not conceal his belief that America was in the midst of an extraordinary experiment in educating the populace of a vast, heterogeneous, and pluralistic society. The world Cremin created in *American Education*, within the conventions of its genre, is, however, richly textured, learned, and with its share of surprises. Cremin's reviewers prefer the genre of Satire or Tragedy to that of Romance or Comedy. They apparently think they are in possession of the "correct" version or of a superior version of America's educational past, and that Cremin's version is inferior or incorrect. All we learn from their criticisms is that Cremin's ideological position and favoured rhetorical mode of emplotment is different than theirs, which leads to different versions of the world of education, one not any more "correct" than the other. But catholicity of view or breadth of "horizon of understanding" is not a trademark of American historiography.

Cremin rarely bothered to answer his critics; when he did, he was profoundly charitable towards them. He neither wanted nor expected praise, just to be accepted at something near what he considered his worth as an historian. In fact he became increasingly frustrated at reviewers' misreadings of his work but attempted to ignore them and to transcend the factionalism afflicting educational his-

toriography. If one wonders what might have been, let us say, the repressed content of Cremin's thought, one need wonder no longer. One has only to turn to the "President's Comments" in the *Spencer Foundation Annual Report, 1990*. In the context of some observations about the shortcomings of peer review, Cremin delivered himself of these telling sentiments:

Individuals who disagree on substantive, methodological, or ideological questions can easily transform those disagreements into criticisms of quality....In addition, there are vastly different styles and canons of reviewing in the several fields...and we must be constantly aware of those differences as we make our own judgments on the basis of reviewers' judgments. Then, beyond that, we must watch out for the kind of "killer" review one sees from time to time in the book review sections of newspapers, or in theater or music columns—the kind of review that manages to be meanly destructive without being even minimally informative.

Although I think *American Education* has been a victim of historiographical fashions—again, one gets from its critics little sense of its intellectual sweep and adventurousness—it must be said that Cremin was not an altogether innocent party to the kind of misreading his work received. He never had a firm sense of the "ideal" reader or audience for *American Education*. Or, to put it another way, I believe *American Education* was written with three or four kinds of readers or audience in mind: historians of education, his-

torians in general, educational policy-makers, and the lay public. It is not an easy task to write for and to satisfy many different audiences. For Cremin, "history should be a lamp to light the present." He wanted to reach out to a lay audience and to educationists as well as to professional historians, whether specializing in education or not. It is no easy task to satisfy the experts and specialists in history while making history accessible to non-specialists. *American Education* did not please historians and (though volume II won a Pulitzer Prize) intimidated the non-specialist. Now, finally, in *Popular Education and Its Discontents*, his last book, there is a rapprochement of writer, audience, and text.

Cremin's image of his audience is firm—education students, interested lay persons, educational policy-makers. The text is situated explicitly within the context of the current debates over school reform in the United States and the emergence of the Excellence Movement. Cremin's intentions are clear—to make sense of the current crisis in education in terms of the tension between excellence in education and the popularization, diversity, and politicization of education. To Cremin, the "genius" of American education lay in popularization, diversity or multitudinousness, and politicization. On balance, Cremin is convinced education has advanced equality. He is equally convinced that so long as education remains so highly politicized, it is folly to talk about excellence in education. In this sense, despite its reference to Freud's famous text, the thrust of

Popular Education and Its Discontents is more de Tocqueville than Freud. It is essential reading for anyone wishing to understand the present moment in American education.

Cremin always wrote history from and to the present. Not that he considered history a policy science offering solutions to our present-day educational problems. The one "solution" Cremin suggests is this—since so many responsibilities have been laid on the public school it is time to think more *comprehensively* about education. For Cremin, no serious discussion of contemporary educational policy could afford to ignore the multitude of agencies that carry on education. The American public needed to reconsider where to invest its effort in education. To intervene intelligently in education, policy-makers had to consider the total range of educational agencies that pervade the world of the child and the adolescent and then assess the public school's special responsibilities in light of that consideration. If responsibility for intervention in the lives of students were spread among these various educational agencies, the pressure on the public school to care for the "whole child" and solve all the nation's social problems might be relaxed and the school might be able to get on with the task of education, however that might be defined through informed public debate.

Above all, Cremin believed that solutions to the problems of American education would emerge only from such informed public debate. Before priorities in public school policy or practice could be set, educational aims

and purposes had to be debated. And for Cremin, a broad public discussion over the scope and purpose of American education was long overdue. Questions like what knowledge or what values, skills, or sensibilities the public school should transmit could not be answered until the larger questions of what it means to be an American, the kind of society Americans want to live in and want their children to live in, and hence what they are prepared to have the public school teach their children were publicly debated. For Cremin, such questions were at the heart of the crisis of American education; public debate was necessary because the American *paideia* was still in the making. Here was a role for history and the historian of education.

Cremin was troubled by the poverty of public discourse on education in the United States. His project, at least since his *The Genius of American Education* (1965), was marked by a distrust of the "experts" and a profound commitment to public dialogue, to better public conversation about education. Cremin would not allow the world of American education to be historically unintelligible to his fellow citizens. The historian's responsibility was to encourage or enlarge and inform the "[educational] conversation and the dialogue in the public sphere." This is what Cremin meant when he insisted that "history should be a lamp to light the present." The responsibility of the professional historian was to make educational history accessible and relevant to the lay public and to educational policy-makers. To Cremin, Nietzsche's claim

that "history is a costly and superfluous luxury of the understanding" was an utter falsity. History was the discipline par excellence which helps to shape our conception of the past and how the present has emerged from the past. History was, above all other disciplines, indispensable in developing an ever more sophisticated and accessible public knowledge about public education. And thus history would help effect a responsible transition to an ever more effective democratic education in the future. This was the burden and the opportunity of the historian of American education.

Cremin preferred to quote Socrates rather than Nietzsche. He was fond of quoting Socrates' "the unexamined life is unfit to be lived by man." And it is this, he was wont to say, that propels us to study the past, even though we can never know it fully. Lawrence Cremin is greatly missed.

Sol Cohen
UCLA

Angus McLaren. *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945.* Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990. Pp. 228. \$16.95.

Angus McLaren's *Our Own Master Race* is the first work to provide a history of Canadian eugenics. It is long overdue. McLaren joins a group of distinguished historians who have examined the impact of this im-