

through the veil of forgetfulness behind which many people hide. It is also a stark reminder that history is rarely simply about the past.

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BECKER, Peter, and Richard F. WETZELL (eds.) — *Criminals and Their Scientists: The History of Criminology in International Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp. 492.

While a relatively new academic discipline, the science of criminology dates back to at least the early nineteenth century. This volume of stimulating essays on the theory and practice of criminology originated from a 1998 conference on the history of criminology. All 21 essays adopt a case-study approach to revealing the nuances within the competing discourses on who was a “criminal” and the best methods to punish offenders and curb the outbreak of crime and deviant behaviour. Of these, the majority (17) focus on Eastern and Western Europe, notably Germany. The remaining four chapters address the emergence of specific facets of criminology in Argentina, Australia, Japan, and the United States. This primarily Euro-centric emphasis clearly detracts from the “international perspective” of the book. Moreover, the collection deals almost exclusively with the period from the beginning of the nineteenth century to 1945.

*Criminals and Their Scientists* attempts to uncover “every active participant in the discourse on crime and criminals” (p. 3). In so doing, these essays help to further our knowledge and understanding of the role played by so-called experts, or “competent men” (p. 3), in the social construction of the criminal as a “class apart” (p. 5). These experts included welfare and police officials, jurists, medical practitioners, psychiatrists, and philanthropists. All of their views of criminals fit within Foucault’s power/knowledge paradigm, which meant that the subject of their expert gaze, “the criminal,” was stripped of personal identity and reduced to a social problem that society loathed and these “competent men” could apparently solve. Indeed, their expertise allowed many of these men to achieve professional prestige and the clout to influence criminal justice policy in several countries. However, while espoused as a key organizing principle of this volume, the power/knowledge paradigm is utilized rather unevenly throughout the book and to limited effectiveness in terms of unraveling the dynamic between criminals and their scientists.

This collection, a co-publication of the German Historical Institute, is organized into four parts. Underpinning each part is the impact of Cesare Lombroso’s seminal work, *On Criminal Man*, upon the study of the extent to which the criminal is born or made. Similarly, each author endeavours to place his or her analysis of the birth of criminology, along with the production, dissemination, and implementation of criminological knowledge, within the appropriate historical, intellectual, social, and political contexts. While not every essay accomplishes

this important task successfully, when taken as a whole, this collection reminds us of the fact that, stripped bare of their academic credentials and institutional affiliations, these “competent men” were simply members of the middle class who felt compelled, mainly out of self-interest, to pass judgement upon, and thus criminalize, poor and working-class values, norms, and individuals. In this sense, a key theme of this volume, which the editors did not clearly identify, is the underlying prevalence of morality that was often used to justify the need to monitor, detain, and punish deviant and potentially deviant members of society.

Part 1, “Nonacademic Sites of Nineteenth Century Criminological Discourse,” delves into the growth of the science of criminology and some of the early purveyors of this burgeoning area of study. Among the topics covered in this part are the origins of criminology during the French Revolution, the part played by members of the Victorian judiciary in articulating the new concept of the “reasonable man” in murder cases, the apparent association of criminality with Jews, crime, and immorality in late-nineteenth-century urban Germany, and the criminologists’ gaze. Throughout part 1 the authors deftly reveal how the new discourse on criminals completely stripped the individual criminal of any personal identity. Instead, “the criminal” is a “type” of human, one often devoid of “normal” mental and intellectual faculties. Once these identities had been removed, it became much easier for criminologists and the state, particularly after the Nazis rose to power in Germany, to deal with criminals, who were often depicted as Jews, as they saw fit, without a great deal of public opposition.

“Criminology as Scientific and Political Practice in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries” is the focus of part 2. Here we see the growing influence of criminology on the formation of political and criminal justice policies, notably around the mounting popularity of eugenics as a science for detecting criminal behaviour. The doctrine of the biologically inferior individual, whether in Argentina, France, Germany, Japan, or the United States, the authors contend, gained academic and political credence and concentrated debate around the criminal’s “social underworld” and how best to “reform” or eradicate this environment. It also lent increasing legitimacy to the call for the sterilization of criminals for the benefit of society. Unfortunately, Nicole Hahn Rafter, who examined these developments within the United States, did not draw links to Canada and to how, in this country at least, criminologists, either self-styled or internationally recognized, did not play a key part in championing the need to sterilize the feeble-minded as a crime-control measure.

Part 3 turns to the actual practice of criminology. “The Making of the Criminologist” is, from the standpoint of social history, arguably the strongest section in *Criminals and Their Scientists*. In this section a vital theme in the origins of criminology and criminologists clearly surfaces: the impact of modernity. The chapters chronicle how criminologists throughout Europe plied their trade and the techniques such as electro-shock therapy that they employed to detect and treat criminals. Practitioners would visit jails, prisons, and asylums to study criminals and their habits and traits, a practice often referred to as “practical criminology.” This included examining criminals for such physical marks as tattoos,

which many considered to be a distinctive sign of a pathological criminal class. Or, as Lombroso posited, tattoos were a “professional characteristic” of the criminal (p. 345).

Eventually practical criminology was used by the state and criminal justice officials as an accepted method of responding to the apparent rise in criminal activity and the decline of morality ushered in by modernity. As Jane Caplan asserts in her study of criminals and tattoos in Europe between 1880 and 1920, criminology set out to create a discourse that could expand the definition of deviance and thus legitimize more state controls within society, which many middle-class residents of modern Europe hoped would curb, if not eliminate, the scourges of modernity: crime, especially white slavery and murder, immorality, and general social disorder. The five chapters in part 3 are superbly crafted and, with the precision of an expert criminologist, weave the theme of modernity and the making of the criminologist together to produce the most intellectually engaging part of this collection. However, Philippe Artierers’s piece on what criminals actually thought about the very criminologists who studied them was rather thin on primary historical evidence.

The fourth and final part of *Criminals and Their Scientists*, “Criminology in the First Half of the Twentieth Century: The Case of Weimar and Nazi Germany,” directly addresses the notion of the criminal as “other.” In “The Biology of Morality,” Oliver Liang dissects the ways in which biology was used to label people in inter-war Bavaria as criminals. More precisely, non-churchgoers, non-traditional women (those who refused to marry), unruly workers, and those on the left of the political spectrum were labelled as “hysterics,” “psychopaths,” or biologically inferior and thus deserving of punishment. Ultimately, the four chapters that conclude this book shed new light on the complicity of criminology, and many criminologists, in the creation of and justification for Nazi race laws.

Despite the wealth of information and fine scholarship contained in this book, overall, *Criminals and Their Scientists* does not adequately tackle the actual origins of criminology. This is due in part to the inability of the editors to provide a precise definition of criminology around which the volume could have been structured. Similarly, the absence of a chapter on Canada and the rise of scientific and academic criminology in this country is a glaring omission. Perhaps attempting to define and trace the beginnings of a field of study that, by its sheer breadth of focus and inter-disciplinary nature, is a task that cannot be left to just one collection of essays. In some regards, criminology, just like “criminal man,” may indeed remain undefinable.

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