

design a new admissions system, nor even the creation of OFFA, all of which stemmed from pressures within the Blair Government, can yet be said to justify the statement that the right of universities to select their own students is 'little more than a ritualistic reiteration of a faded value given that institutions increasingly have less control over the structure of the selection process itself' (220).

Indeed what is striking in the record that Tapper presents and, accepting his main thesis that the restructuring of higher education over the last quarter of a century has almost entirely arisen from pressure from the state, is how effective higher education's rearguard action has been in the fundamentals of how the system is run. Tapper does not present evidence that 'the liberal idea of the university and institutional autonomy' (227) has been overthrown, only that it is under pressure and may be fraying somewhat at the edges. The recent triumph of the argument against a wholesale reliance on metrics in the 2013 RAE represents a case in point. It is too sweeping to describe higher education institutions as 'creatures of the state' (234), although Tapper's general depiction of a transformation from a 'deferential' to a 'regulatory' to a 'prescriptive' state rings true. However, the picture is sometimes more variegated and the optimist might look back at the fragmented policy formation picture that Tapper paints and be reassured that parts at least of the higher education system have an inbuilt capacity for survival which may continue to frustrate the encroachment of the state. This book represents a very stimulating contribution to the debate as to how these institutions can maintain their core values in a changing governance environment.

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## **Knowledge is power! The rise and fall of European educational movements, 1848–1939**, by Tom Steele, Bern, Peter Lang, 2007, 315pp., £40, ISBN 978-3-03910-563-2

Popular education has been a vibrant element in the development of all modern European societies as they have evolved from feudal structures into the industrial and post-industrial eras. Modern societies, especially in their fully developed capitalist phase, require ever increasing levels of literacy, numeracy and appropriate technological and administrative skills to ensure that the workforce is equipped to build an efficient, competitive economy. The fundamental motivation for educational expansion, at the most general level, and spanning all sectors, is thus based upon the perceived needs of the economy at any given stage. It is from this base that what we now term skills-based, vocational training has developed and has been dominant.

There is, however, a wholly other dimension to educational development and analysis: the popular education which Tom Steele, following Habermas, argues constitutes a key part of the

'public sphere'. The theme of this book is to demonstrate 'the importance played by popular education in the rise of national democratic movements, workers' movements and, to an extent, women's emancipation' (8), and the subsequent role that such movements played in the restoration of democratic governments after the period of totalitarian rule in the twentieth century.

This is a unique and important study, with a large canvas. Tom Steele draws on a wide range of intellectual and cultural critics to explore in detail the development, within the *bourgeois* public sphere, of most of the major societies in Europe, of democratic, popular movements opposed to the existing order and striving for the emancipation of the masses. A starting point was the growth of post-enlightenment scientific exploration and understanding, with an implicitly strong challenge to and critique of religious orthodoxy. Tom Steele explores in some depth the different trajectories of such movements in Protestant North Western Europe and the Roman Catholic south. After touching on some of the movements 'from below' – such as the radical, democratic elements in the English Civil War, and early nineteenth century 'Owenism' in Britain – the analysis moves to a detailed examination of the Lutheran minister, Grundtvig, and his educational ideas which led to the formation of the widely influential Danish Folk High Schools.

The links between Comtian positivism and the developing Freemasonry movements are a particular concern of the book, and Tom Steele makes a strong case, following Hobsbawm, for their having been greatly underestimated as voluntary associations with a key catalytic role in civil society.

As capitalist societies developed more centralised and complex structures in the later nineteenth century, so collective forms of organisation and politics emerged, and a stronger central state became a distinguishing feature of the most advanced industrial societies in Europe – Britain and Germany in particular. As far as popular education was concerned, this led, as Tom Steele notes, to the domination by the state of educational provision.

This book is not a *history* of popular education movements, and still less is it a study of the educational provision undertaken in the various societies. Nor is it an economic or political analysis of the societies concerned, and the place within them of popular education movements. The primary form of working class social and political education from the late nineteenth century onwards was, in most societies, and particularly in Britain, for male trade unionists. It has been argued that this form of education, the organisations which underpinned it, and the curricular socialisation that it involved, was to a large extent a manifestation of their *incorporation* into the bourgeois ideology and structures of capitalism. (Miliband 1969; Fieldhouse 1996). This is a view with which I am in partial agreement, and I would hazard that Tom Steele too has a similar perspective. It would have been interesting and relevant to have had some comparative analysis, and exploration of the connections between these structures and ideologies, and the movements which Tom Steele focuses upon.

Such issues are not, however, the concern of this study. Tom Steele's book is, rather, a masterly, unique and comprehensive cultural studies analysis of the phenomenon of popular education in modern Europe. The range and variety of sources consulted and discussed, and the subtlety of the analysis, make this a distinguished contribution both to cultural studies and to educational theory.

## Note

I should make clear that Dr Tom Steele and I have written together quite extensively, and are long-standing colleagues and friends. Nevertheless, our perspectives differ to an extent, as this review indicates.

## References

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**Education and community**, by Dianne Gereluk, London and New York, Continuum, 2008, xii + 206pp., £24.99, ISBN 978 1847 060396

One of the pivotal eras in the history of western ideas is centred on the notion of the social contract: the detailed examination of what happens when individuals cement the ‘deal’ that enables them to stick together as a community. The motives were defensive (avoiding chaos, as in Thomas Hobbes), aspirational (achieving our true humanity, as in John Locke) and political (proposing frameworks of accountable power, Jean-Jacques Rousseau). Together they – and others – constructed a dialogue which has continued to this day. One of the towering twentieth century figures in the genre is the American philosopher John Rawls, with his concept of a fair society as one which one would be willing to join without prior knowledge of our role or rewards.

Dianne Gereluk’s own examination of the potential of schools to assist in the construction of satisfactory communities is firmly within the Rawlsian tradition. Her goals are twofold: to establish the role of schools in ‘fostering communities’ (x) and to identify which types of community are ‘valuable and worthwhile in a liberal society’ (xi). In addition to Rawls, she draws heavily on the work of Friedrich Tönnies and John Dewey, and has a refreshingly critical approach to the ‘social capital’ simplicities of Robert Putnam, especially its difficulties with diversity.

The scaffolding of the argument is very clear (sometimes intrusively so – an admirably accessible text is heavily studded with interim summaries and cross-references). After an intriguing autobiographical introduction (beginning in a left-wing Ukrainian community in Canada), Part I of the book explores normative principles, notably the tensions that can undermine more idealistic concepts of community such as Putnam’s. Part II offers a normative theory, consistently returning to Rawls, justice and fairness, including through his concept of ‘reasonable pluralism’. An especially powerful section is the empirical test of the theory against the reality of three very different schools: an unashamedly ‘liberal’ institution, offering a ‘whole-school’ approach rooted in global citizenship; a Muslim school carefully negotiating its religiously-based commitments against the legal and social requirements of a wider society; and a Christian fundamentalist school, proudly and defiantly separatist in its ethos. As the author says, the middle case is the most interesting, probing ‘a difficult and grey area within a liberal conception of community’ (100). Part III looks explicitly at ‘community education’, especially within the context of a changing policy environment, with its increasing stress on prescription, on competition and upon accountability. In this context, ‘community’ can be appealed to in both naïve and manipulative fashion: ‘Community is everywhere, yet it is nowhere’ (12).

The upshot is what Gereluk (following David Halpin) calls in her final chapter ‘a realistic utopian view’ (175). This is based both in the theory (a basic structure of ‘fair terms of social cooperation’) and the empirical record of ‘myriad communities’ (177). The test for acceptability of the latter includes constraints set by principles of ‘justice’ and ‘equality’; in other words ‘diversity within the boundaries of reasonable pluralism’, with an inherent drive towards a reduction of educational inequality (177–78).