

Book Reviews



Caesar, Terry. *Writing in Disguise: Academic Life in Subordination.* Athens: Ohio Univ. Pr., 1998. 177p. \$25, alk. paper (ISBN 0-8214-1220-5). LC 97-30432.

Writing in Disguise explores an aspect of academic communication—that between subordinates and supervisors. After a lengthy introduction explaining the terms and purposes of the book, Caesar takes up a number of individual texts, fictional and nonfictional, in each of six chapters devoted, in turn, to sexual harassment, dissertation directors, rejection letters, memos, freshman composition, and resignation letters. As the work of an English professor (at Clarion University), this book will have a strong sense of familiarity (almost a sense of déjà vu at times) for other English professors, but the net the author casts is sufficiently wide to make this work of some interest for most people in the academic world.

Behind Caesar's book is *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Pr., 1990), in which the anthropologist James C. Scott attempts to reach more general conclusions from what he learned about power relations and discourse, specifically resistance to domination, while studying class relations in a Malay village. Specifically, Scott observes that subordinate groups express critiques of power in "hidden transcripts" (and that, similarly, the powerful express otherwise inexpressible claims of rule in such transcripts). Taking up this idea, Caesar proceeds to explore "writing in disguise," describing his effort as "an academic rereading of Scott" in which "the letter that should not be written is all of a piece to me with the article that could not be published."

Such dependence upon the work of sociologists and anthropologists is common among practitioners of late twentieth-century literary/cultural studies, for whom all the world's a text and all the men and

women merely readers. Generalizations and conclusions from the work of colleagues in the social sciences frequently become the basis for literary studies, in which is presented evidence from literary works (or anything else designated as "a text") to extend their validity and expand or qualify their insights, especially when those insights concern power. Thus, Scott's compelling study of "the often fugitive political conduct of subordinate groups" (*Domination and the Arts of Resistance*) provides the discipline and structure for this book, in which Caesar makes serious and conscientious use of Scott's insights to explore several aspects of power relationships in academic life.

That unrelenting seriousness, expressed in a gray and controlled style, keeps the book from being a page-turner. Although in one respect its methodology is very fashionable, the book as a whole is an old-fashioned set of philosophical reflections, often rather interesting, but still ponderous because it has little, if any, spirit of playfulness and because it presents its agenda, such as it is, with indirection. With endearing honesty, Caesar begins and ends his book by giving accounts of unsuccessful attempts at parody. Not too surprisingly, whether writing to a graduate student to mock a rule he must, unwillingly, enforce or to his department head to pretend to resign, Caesar fails to achieve the desired result and is, alas, taken seriously by his correspondents. (To see that Caesar can produce somewhat livelier and crisper writing, one must turn to the end notes; these comprise almost a quarter of the book because many are small essays in which, among other things, Caesar airs his grudges against highfliers in the profession.)

Tomes on the academic life are being turned out in abundance right now, many

of them sermons and satires intended to press an agenda on a more general audience than Caesar seems to envision for his work. In a land where an astonishingly large proportion of the population completes undergraduate and graduate education and where the public cost of maintaining institutions of higher education is considerable, constant debate about the goals and direction of these institutions is to be expected. Along with more impassioned attempts to influence that direction, there is place for more modest reflections from a thoughtful academic who thinks a lot about the implications of the rejection letters and memos that many of us thoughtlessly toss into the trash (sometimes unread) and who, Ishmael-like, feels November in his soul.—*George R. Keiser, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas.*

Creighton, Sarah Hammond. *Greening the Ivory Tower: Improving the Environmental Track Record of Universities, Colleges, and Other Institutions.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Pr., 1998. 337p. \$25, alk. paper (ISBN 0262531518). LC 97-39382.

Many of us who work in universities have been attracted by the thought that our work consists of doing the right thing rather than amassing wealth (the salaries of major administrators notwithstanding), and we believe our work's goal is ultimately to increase the health, wisdom, and genuine wealth of the larger community. Many of us, for similar reasons, have committed ourselves to environmental amelioration, and have become focused on, say, deforestation in tropical wetlands, or fossil fuel burning in an upwind state, or land development down the road from home.

A concern less apparent to us, however, may lie within the academic enclave in which we labor. The university is an institution, and like all physical institutions, it impacts the environment. In proportion to their size and intensity, our academic institutions have negative effects on the biosphere, sometimes startlingly huge effects. Creighton notes that Tufts University uses more electricity than any other

business served by the region's electrical generating company. When the venerable environmentalist Pete Seeger was asked recently, "What is the most important thing to do for the environment?" his response was terse: "Act locally." Those of us in the university—faculty and staff and managers—who would act locally in our workplace must change an immense number of day-to-day technical operations, a lengthy, tedious process.

Greening the Ivory Tower is a handbook for carrying out that process, and it would seem invaluable. Though it includes experiences from a variety of institutions, the book is based on work accomplished at Tufts University through a research program ("Tufts CLEAN!") begun in 1990 with a grant from the federal Environmental Protection Agency. The author was project manager of Tufts CLEAN! and now works in the Massachusetts Division of Capital Planning and Operations. Her book provides comprehensive information for performing what has come to be known as an "environmental audit" of a university. The first step of an audit is to discover quantity and type of resource use, along with quantity and type of waste generated. These data provide a basis for planning reductions and changes in technologies. After that comes implementing the plan for "greening" the campus.

The audience to which *Greening the Ivory Tower* is addressed, writes Creighton, are people who "are interested and motivated to help green their campuses but have little or no experience with changing institutions or with the technologies that are needed to accomplish the task." To serve such an audience, the handbook must be basic, comprehensive, detailed, and accessible. This book meets all of these criteria. Although dealing with highly technical issues, it systematically presents basic information on how universities function and how their functioning may be changed. The first section of the book is a primer on university structure and dynamics. The descriptions are peppered with insights easily overlooked: the tendency to overgather data coupled with