
Hannah’s book applies Foucault’s notion of “governmentality” to an analysis of American state development.¹ As distinguished from approaches like Skowronek’s that measure state “capacity,” governmentality promises to provide a more subtle analytical tool by distinguishing between the capacity for regulation and decisions about “whether and how much to regulate” (37).² Hannah develops his argument for the utility of governmentality through a discussion of the career of Francis Amasa Walker. Hannah is particularly effective in showing that Walker’s work as director of the 1870 and 1880 U.S. censuses can be subjected to a Foucauldian analysis in such terms as “surfaces of emergence,” “authorities of delimitation,” and “grids of specification” (43).

As a historical geographer, Hannah is obviously concerned with space. The phrase from the book’s title, “the mastery of territory,” might suggest an interest in territorial control in the conventional sense, but Hannah focuses more on what he terms the “spatial politics of governmental knowledge” (113). Drawing on work that shows how colonial regimes use mapping to construct colonial knowledge, Hannah argues that Walker’s exercises in mapping census data not only constructed social objects but helped to “encourage the assumption that the nation is a unified entity.” Walker’s maps also made a “visual argument that the most significant building blocks” for the nation “are the individual states,” the consequence being that a city’s significance was “absorbed in that of its state” (146–147).

Hannah extends his analysis by drawing on feminist scholarship to discuss the importance of gender for governmentality. Hannah situates Walker within the context of a “crisis of masculinity” in the late nineteenth century, arguing that Walker tried to regain control of society by promoting a militarized ideal of self-sufficiency for white men of the better social classes. Although Hannah’s adoption of an “anxiety thesis” to explain the preoccupation of men like Walker with manhood is simplistic, he does demonstrate that Walker’s ideas about masculinity were linked to his eventual advocacy of immigration restriction. For Walker, the “presence of foreigners was a threat to white American male potency” (185). The reason, Hannah explains, was that when white men saw how immigrants lived, they lost their desire for sexual intercourse. Walker’s concern with immigration restriction, Hannah concludes, was “the culmination of his program of governmentality” (219). Hannah connects Walker’s growing concerns with immigrants to his thought about several other matters, including the mobility and productivity of

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labor, the place of “inferior races” in American society, and the role of education in creating a class of men suitable to govern.

Hannah effectively demonstrates that an approach informed by governmentality can shed light on certain features of American state activity during the late nineteenth century. The implications of this approach, however, are not entirely clear. Governmentality can help to show that censuses construct objects rather than simply reflecting them, but it does not explain the extent to which the categories that census makers use to construct objects are reflections of social categories that are constructed elsewhere in society. In other words, are censuses a primary or merely derivative site of social construction? Furthermore, despite Hannah’s sometimes expansive claims for governmentality’s utility, his observations about many aspects of Walker’s project, such as immigration restriction, depend less on an analysis informed by governmentality than on a style of reading reminiscent of less theorized forms of intellectual and cultural analysis. By introducing scholars of state formation to governmentality, Hannah has provided an analytical tool that appears useful for certain tasks. The extent of its applicability, however, will depend on further studies and discussions.

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*The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850–1896.* By Sven Beckert (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2001) 492 pp. $34.95

“From the perspective of this book,” writes Beckert in an early endnote, “the history of New York’s economic elite looks very different from the way it is presented in earlier writings” (344). Scholars are understandably inclined to overreach in their claim to originality, and, in some respects, Beckert’s revisit to this well-established historical topic is less novel than he would have us believe. Readers of this journal, in particular, will be more impressed by the thoroughness of his canvass of traditional sources (as documented by the 133 pages of endnotes) than by his introduction of new sources, methods, or interdisciplinary insights. Yet, in two important senses Beckert is correct. First, he pays far more attention to the political ideologies and actions of New York’s bourgeoisie than have others whose primary interest has been the issue of social exclusivity. Second, he creates a new narrative of upper-class formation, stressing the political conflicts and social divisions among wealthy New Yorkers in the antebellum era, the transforming effects of the Civil War and the depression of the 1870s, and the final and dramatic “consolidation” of the bourgeoisie as a coherent, self-conscious, and powerful upper class in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This narrative contrasts starkly with those that find coherence and continuity where Beckert finds conflict and change.