

have organized such a project. Both editors are well known to historians of American science, and both have much experience with the history of science at Harvard. Elliott, associate curator at the Harvard University archives, is himself a scholar and in the past twenty years has produced a series of reference books that have become indispensable tools for research in science history. Rossiter is professor of history of science at Cornell; her senior thesis at Radcliffe College dealt with Louis Agassiz, a central figure in nineteenth-century Harvard biology, and her subsequent publications include *The Emergence of Agricultural Science: Justus Liebig and the Americans, 1840-1880* and *Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940*.

Perhaps, though, it is just as well that publication of this volume was delayed for six years. While the anniversary celebration might have called for a series of synoptic essays, each providing an overview of the history of a particular scientific discipline in the Harvard context, *Science at Harvard University* makes no pretense of such completeness. Rather, it is a collection of eleven articles on fairly narrow topics—ranging from Toby Appel's sketch of Jeffries Wyman and the significance of personal character in mid-nineteenth-century Harvard natural history, to Rodney Triplett's analysis of the delay in founding a Harvard department of psychology until the 1930s, to an essay on the university's cooperation with IBM in the development of computers, prepared by I. Bernard Cohen (who as emeritus professor of history of science at Harvard was present at much of the history he relates).

The absence of essays on the history of certain disciplines is quite conspicuous. Only a small portion of one chapter deals with the basic biomedical sciences. In addition, chemistry and physics are virtually absent in this book; the period before 1800 is represented only by Sara Genuth's discussion of the role of comets in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century astronomy at Harvard; and discussions of the twentieth century, with one exception, omit the life sciences completely. In

a sense, then, this book is simply the locus for yet a few more studies of mixed quality which fill in some of the gaps left in the already copious work on the history of science at Harvard. But even in assembling a collection of assorted empirical studies, Elliott and Rossiter have made a worthwhile contribution. For example, Bruce Sinclair's analysis of the evolving relationship between Harvard and MIT, and how it reflected competing ideas about the goals of technical education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is first rate. Other particularly noteworthy contributions include the study of Nathaniel Southgate Shaler and geography at Harvard by David Livingstone, and John Parascandola's article on the biochemist turned sociologist turned philosopher, Lawrence J. Henderson. Incidentally, Livingstone, along with Curtis Hinsley who writes on museums and anthropology, also gives at least a nod to the role of libraries in discipline formation.

What makes *Science at Harvard University* special, though, are the editors' brief preface outlining the problems inherent in a project such as this, Rossiter's intelligent introductory chapter on the role of patronage in the institutionalization of the scientific disciplines at Harvard, and Elliott's three contributions: a historiographical essay, a select bibliography, and a chronology of major events (including some library developments). This book is far better than the sort of celebratory exercise that frequently accompanies major institutional anniversaries. If it is also less than it could have been, it is nonetheless a good and useful compilation of studies on science at one of America's oldest and most influential institutions.—*Ed Morman, Institute of the History of Medicine, The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland.*

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Idea of the University: A Reexamination.* New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Pr., 1992. 238 p. (ISBN 0-300-05725-3). LC 92-2928.

John Henry Newman's *The Idea of a University* is the most famous sustained commentary on the nature, purpose, and

function of the modern academic institution. But Newman's book was occasioned by an ambitious undertaking that ended in failure. The Catholic University of Ireland that he founded and led struck no roots in the parochial world of nineteenth century Dublin, and it took two further foundings to give the idea of a university a lasting footing on that soil.

Jaroslav Pelikan's essay follows Newman so closely that the CIP information identifies it as "a commentary on" Newman's book. For all that, it is the most serious, sustained, and thoughtful essay in this vein to appear in many years. Every aspect of the intellectual mission of the university is addressed in a series of thoughtful chapters, while other non-academic obsessions (dormitory life, athletics, for example) are left aside. Pelikan has been professor at Yale for a quarter century and graduate dean for a substantial term during that time, but his book is not deformed by an administrator's preoccupations and penchants. He is pragmatic but substantial, concerned to help us academics think our way into the future with a rigorous sense of our past and a sharp sense of the difference between what is essential and what is accidental about the institution's structures.

A further irony occurs in this book's appearance in the spring of 1992, a time when the affairs of Pelikan's own university had been shaken by controversy that led to the downfall of the president, provost, and two senior deans, all in a matter of weeks. Is it quite *fair* that so thoughtful and balanced a book about the idea of the university should be already nearly swamped by the troubles of the real, tangible university that gave it birth?

Pelikan is a major historian of Christian thought and the author of a magisterial five-volume series, *The Christian Tradition*. Intellectually, he is a centrist and a moderate: many readers will share that position, but it puts him in the tradition that has unconsciously tended to make of the university the church of the unchurched. Pelikan himself confesses this: "Because I have been disappointed

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so often in institutional Christendom and because, by contrast, the university has been for almost half a century the chief repository of truth and the community of wisdom to me personally . . . I have sometimes been in danger of regarding it as the embodiment of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church affirmed in the Nicene Creed." He goes on to say that of course it is *not* that; but the *analogy* is important and determinative in much of our educational tradition.

A short review cannot engage a book of this depth and richness on all points. Perhaps it will suffice here to comment briefly on the chapter devoted to the central position in the university of the library, whose function Pelikan quotes Newman as calling "the embalming of dead genius." Pelikan takes a high view of the institution's function as undertaker: "This vocation of preserving the common memory represents a moral obligation for the ethos and the curriculum of every school and department of the university." To speak of "obligation" blurs the fact that this view of education as cumulative and texts as the pre-eminent repository of the common memory is a contingent choice, depending on the available technology and the predilections of the culture. I know no university library that regards its function as embracing that part of the common memory now contained on film, video and audiotape to the degree that it attempts to comprehend the range of *printed* memory sources. So Pelikan is often more retrospective than prospective. He makes no mention in his library chapter of electronic storage and retrieval, and his only allusion to the technology elsewhere is cautious to the point of aversion: "There is no guarantee that the university will not, as it has all too often in the past, permit itself to be corrupted also in the cultivation of this technology." Here, as elsewhere, Pelikan avoids, or floats above, controversy and his recommendations are mainstream and unremarkable. He cherishes libraries, and in particular their special collections, and he commends others to do likewise. This book's value lies in the firm footing he places under our prejudices.

While sharing much of Pelikan's love of the past, the books of the past, and the glorious institutions that house them, I cannot help but be brought up short by the language in which he speaks of his own ambitions and inadequacies: "I must confess that I am, to an alarming extent, a bibliographical autodidact. I did not learn about many of the standard manuals in my fields from my professors in seminars or lectures or libraries but more or less had to stumble upon these reference works myself. And in some cases, to my acute embarrassment, I have learned about such guides only decades after completing graduate study." Yes, it seems as though the library is the systematic repository of everything there is to know, and as though the right catalog, the right index, the right standard handbook will reduce all that polymorphous buzz of information to an order serene and divine. The scholar then will be a tranquil master of the Glass Bead Game, playing a kind of chess with the texts of the past, to compelling if perhaps slightly sterile results.

But is it not better to imagine the library as a kind of Wild West frontier, and graduate school as wilderness survival training? Our catalogs and indices are in fact more like the maps of Ptolemy's time, wild approximations at best, than the satellite-generated correct-to-within-fifty-meters wonders of our day. If I knew all the manuals and guides in my field, and knew that I knew them all, I think I would be in grave danger. Our libraries need all the serenity and order they can get precisely because they are in fact raging waterspouts of words. We who use them must grab what life preservers we can and swim for it.

And what is true of libraries in this way is true of universities. The final risk that high mandarin dissection of the institution runs is that the liveliness and diversity of the place and its capacity to change and effect change are sacrificed in the name of the quest for order. It would be churlish to greet this book, so very much better than so many others in the same vein, with anything less than a grateful and thoughtful respect. But it is

also a book that demands to be argued with, doubted, and wrestled with: for indeed, that kind of greeting is the highest form of respect that a university can, or at least *should*, condition us to offer our most learned colleagues.—James J. O'Donnell, *University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*

SHORT NOTICES

Educating Black Librarians: Papers from the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the School of Library and Information Sciences, North Carolina Central University. Ed. by Benjamin F. Speller, Jr., Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1991. 158 p. alk. paper, \$28.50 (ISBN 0-89950-574-0). LC 90-53526.

The title of this collection of sixteen papers conveys the significance of the occasion that brought it forth. The title does not, however, convey the scope of this work, which is the ongoing struggle of African Americans for equal opportunity and status in the professions generally, and in librarianship in particular. Especially informative are E. J. Jossey ("The Role of the Black Library and Information Professional in the Information Society: Myths and Realities"), Joyce C. Wright and Margaret Myers in two papers on issues relating to minority employment in libraries, and Kathryn C. Stevenson on the remarkable career of Annette Lewis Phinazee, the first woman and the first African American to get a Ph.D. in Library Science at Columbia. This volume is a timely reminder of the ways in which libraries share the legacy of American racism, and it conveys a sense of the will and energy of those who have committed themselves to overcoming it. (*Stephen Lehmann*)

University and Society: Essays on the Social Role of Research and Higher Education. Ed. by Martin Trow and Thorsten Nybom. London: Jessica Kingsley, 1991. 251p. \$60 (ISBN 1-85302-525-9).

The volume is, in effect, a *Festschrift* for Eskil Bjorklund, retiring director of the Research on Higher Education Program at the Swedish National Board of Universities

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