

in education, childhood, family studies, women's issues, and the influence of medical models in related social policies.

Theresa Richardson
University of Victoria

Richard Freeland. *Academia's Golden Age: Universities in Massachusetts, 1945-1970.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. Pp. 532. \$69.95 Cdn., cloth.

New books on higher education with terms like "golden age" in their title generally give me a headache. Will I encounter yet another nostalgic lament to those bygone days, usually before the 1960s, when students supposedly were uniformly outstanding, and universities were untouched by the forces of politics and social change? No serious historian I know has actually managed to locate such an era; nevertheless, over the last decade, academic polemicists, unhappy with the current state of higher education, have propagated numerous myths about the purity of the university's past.

Thankfully, Richard Freeland's ambitious and intelligent volume is not part of this litany. It is, instead, an important scholarly study of higher education in Massachusetts during a period of prosperity and expansion. Some fifteen years in the making, the book draws from a massive base of research and explores the development of Massachusetts' eight universities:

Harvard, MIT, Boston College, Boston University, Northeastern, Tufts, Brandeis, and the University of Massachusetts. As well as recounting the major events in the history of these institutions from 1945 to 1970, Freeland provides three other valuable components: a history of higher education in Massachusetts before World War II; an overview of the growth of higher education in the U.S. during the post-war period; and an extensive epilogue covering post-secondary educational trends in Massachusetts and the nation during the 1970s and '80s. In form and substance, this book does not lack context.

Its thesis is both complex and provocative: that whatever their origins, universities in Massachusetts (and by implication everywhere else) were driven towards a culture of homogeneity by their relentless pursuit of "higher status" (p. 355). In the expansion period they competed in the academic and economic marketplace for resources that they believed would enhance their reputations. The most successful would be rewarded even more bountifully from both the public and private sectors. Touched by the democratic impulse and the myth of social mobility, all American universities in the post-war period promised to improve undergraduate education, serve their communities, and attract the poor. The reality was that universities, like Harvard and MIT, which privileged graduate training, contract research, and the children of the affluent prospered. Those, like Northeastern and the state University of Massachusetts, whose constituents were primarily undergraduates from

families of more modest means, languished uncomfortably at the lower end of the academic hierarchy. The others—Tufts, Brandeis, Boston College, and Boston University—occupied a middling status in the class-divided university system, and were also, to their dismay, overshadowed by Harvard and MIT.

Though Massachusetts' universities increasingly came to share the same values and aspirations, they did not become identical, and this too is a critical element of Freeland's thesis. He demonstrates how historical constraints, local circumstances, and individual university presidents affected, sometimes idiosyncratically, the characters of the institutions. Nathan Pusey, president of Harvard in the 1960s, perpetuated the university's extremely decentralized structure, though more administrative direction was evidently required. John Silber ruled Boston University with an iron fist, largely oblivious to the collective will of students and faculty. Surprisingly, both embattled presidents survived.

By grounding his exhaustive, neo-Weberian analysis in the political economy of the academic marketplace, Freeland advances the study of higher education. He illustrates ways in which university prestige was socially constructed and extended. For example, by becoming "the nation's leading recipient" of defence-related subsidies (p. 141), MIT achieved its lofty status in the context of cold war politics. Similarly, universities with wealthy students charged high fees and earned large alumni and corporate donations—enabling them to buy even

more prestige—than their poorer campus cousins. What any of this had to do with the quality of an individual student's academic experience is questionable, and Freeland's book, to its credit, poses the question.

There is, however, a paradox in the author's discussion of this process which is not satisfactorily resolved. In marking the progress of Massachusetts' universities, he refers frequently to the reports of national assessment bodies on the performance of various academic departments. He appears to accept these verdicts, which almost always assigned high ranking to the graduate programmes of Harvard and low ranking to those of Northeastern and UMass. But surely these "grades," which to this day matter enormously in the United States, were infused with the same loaded system of elite values by which universities as a whole were judged. A critique, or at least a more detailed assessment of the assessors, would have strengthened Freeland's account.

This paradox reflects a broader, and perhaps understandable, tension in the book. While the author is critical of the crass opportunism of the universities and while he exposes their collective failure to meet the academic needs of minority groups and the poor, he is obviously devoted to university life. And he acknowledges that for all its imperfections, higher education accomplished much in a state with modest resources and an undulating economy. Rather than mindlessly boosting or cynically denouncing the institutions, he explores with insight and subtlety the external and internal

dynamics which shaped their development.

While a wide readership of this book is deserved, it is likely to attract mainly the interest of Massachusetts' academics and higher education specialists. The prose is lucid but overly tame and at times plodding. Freeland's coverage of the turbulent student movement of the late '60s, for example, is distinctly understated. At Brandeis, he writes, "these were not calm times—they included a bank robbery and a murder involving radical Brandeis students—but [President] Schottland kept the university functioning and relatively stable" (p. 233). With raw material like that, any writer who does not enliven the text of his very large book might expect a small audience. Those readers who do persist will be rewarded for their labours.

Paul Axelrod
York University

Elmar Lechner, H. Rumpler, and H. Zdarzil, eds. *Zur Geschichte des oesterreichischen Bildungswesens: Probleme und Perspektiven der Forschung (On the History of Austria's Education System: Research Problems and Perspectives)*. Vienna: Verlag der oesterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1992. Pp. 532.

In late 1988, the Austrian Academy of Science convened a conference on the history of Austria's education

system, and the present volume contains most of the papers submitted for the symposium. Since scholars from neighbouring countries had also been invited to discuss their views on congruencies and interdependencies with Austrian educational history, the scope of the contributions is far-reaching, covering methodological problems of historical research, historiography, and historical periodization in Austria as well as several other countries. In addition, the history of certain educational institutions and personalities is dealt with extensively.

Of the twenty-one papers published in this book, six were written by scholars from the German Democratic Republic, the USSR, Yugoslavia, Italy, the Federal Republic of Germany, and Hungary. The first cluster of articles focuses on the methodology of educational historiography, whereas the second part comprises specific aspects of historical research. Here, issues of Austrian educational institutions form the essence of the presentations. The geographical range of topics is expanded in part three where the contributors from abroad discuss questions of inter-relationships between their own countries and Austria. In the final portion of the book, Austrian historians elaborate on selected and characteristic problems in education during particular periods of Austrian history. Most of the authors occupy university positions in departments of history of education.

Unless North American readers have a solid command of the German language, they will experience difficulties in working their way through the book despite the fact that the edi-