

the beginning of the book, resulting in some garbled words and faulty sentence structure. These criticisms aside, the book is well worth reading by anyone involved in selecting, buying, supplying, or publishing library materials. As Martin summarizes so well: "all participants in the collection management process would benefit from having more information about the other players. They are not in a zero-sum game where someone must lose and someone win, but in a partnership where all can do better by knowing more about the other partners. By improving communication and taking a broader view, publishers, vendors, and librarians can improve the ways in which information and knowledge are packaged, distributed, and used. This is particularly desirable in what promises, for some time to come, to be a very tight financial setting for libraries."—*Maija M. Lutz, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts*

The Social Role of Higher Education: Comparative Perspectives. Eds. Ken Kempner and William G. Tierney. New York: Garland Pub. (Garland Reference Library of Social Science, 988; Garland Studies in Higher Education, 7), 1996. 215p. \$40 alk. paper. ISBN 0-8153-1765-4. LC 96-16423.

This is a book of case studies of higher education in different national contexts. The cases are taken from seven countries and one region (Central America), and many are written by scholars from the countries themselves. The editors begin with a chapter that outlines a theoretical perspective on what they define as the "organizational culture" of higher education. An ambitious description of the organizational culture is quickly provided on the very first page of the book: it consists of the missions, symbols and communication, strategy, environment, and knowledge production within universities. This framework leads one to

expect a strongly comparative volume, but the editors note that the articles are, for the most part, focused on the national political context of education, especially the way academic work interacts with different national histories and agendas.

Some of these histories and agendas are described as cultural themes or values, especially in the case of Japan and Thailand. Although they provide interesting reading, national and cultural themes are difficult to pin down, as scholars of "national character studies" during the Second World War found. For example, the intuitive insights of Japanese culture described by Ruth Benedict in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) enthralled readers during and after the war, yet such studies were soon abandoned. Characterizing the national character of any country was too often only a repetition of the values and ideals expressed by the upper classes and the ideal literary heritage of a country. Still, there is a temptation, given into in this book, to characterize Mexican, Finnish, or Japanese culture as having core values, even today in a world of nation-states that sometimes come apart at the seams. The editors foresaw criticisms of the cultural theme approach of many chapters, and so refer to the case studies as "interpretive" social science. Reading interpretive work is always fascinating, and this book is no exception. Each chapter is like a new journey to a distant land, though the itinerary to these different lands is not very clear.

The cases were chosen by opportunities of scholarship rather than by a theoretical logic because there is no common theme or structure that relates them together. Some cases are from Latin America (Mexico, Chile, Central America, and Costa Rica), and the others are from disparate countries around the globe, including Japan, Thailand, Australia, and Finland. Although each

case seeks to analyze higher education in light of the way knowledge and academic work are created in a national context, the cases are not easily compared. The size of the countries, their economies, their centrality to European higher education traditions, and the relative importance of indigenous populations all differ so much as to make comparisons across the chapters difficult. This is no doubt why the editors chose not to write a concluding chapter that could have put the cases in order. As it is, one has the impression that more and more cases could be added to the end of the book, expanding it like an accordion. One chapter does stand out in bold relief because it is very comparative. Gary Rhoades and Don Smart describe the way that U.S. and Australian institutions have developed different entrepreneurial approaches to attracting international graduate students. This fascinating chapter points out the tremendous profit-making machine that became international graduate student education in Australia. In comparison, the system that evolved in the United States was based much more on international political diplomacy than the bottom line of university funding.

The four chapters on Latin America range from Tierney's review of Central American universities with a call for more local relevance, to Susan Twombly's study of women in Costa Rican higher education. Her article is based on interviews with women administrators and attempts to understand why there are more of them in the University of Costa Rica than found in most U.S. institutions, even though Costa Rica is characterized as a country with a strong male hierarchy and "Machista" culture. Another Latin American case, described by Rollin Kent, is that of higher education change in Mexico. This chapter explores the astounding increase in higher education in Mexico in the past twenty

years and the yet-undefined role the newly educated students will play in Mexico. A chapter on higher education in Chile by Figueroa and Valle is less insightful because it becomes entangled in a discussion of academic decentralization in a world of political centralization.

The discussion of Japanese higher education by Kempner and Makino contrasts the traditional idea of creating a well-educated leadership class (such as the samurai) with a need for more flexibility today. The linear, elitist model is described as modernist, and may not be as useful at the end of the century as it was during the past fifty years of Japan's rapid economic growth. This chapter calls for reform in light of postmodern social needs, especially in terms of the "cognitive maps" of Japanese students in the future. The chapter on Thai culture by Bovonsiri, Uampuang, and Fry is less polemical. It describes Thai higher education as a syncretic system of Western and Thai values, or as a triangle. Having said that, the chapter portrays the university system only as a result of these forces, rather than as an entity that shapes and changes national history and values.

The last chapter by Jussi Valimaa on intellectuals in Finland concludes the book on a pensive note. Valimaa notes that the characteristic role of public intellectuals—who see their contributions to media and politics as important as they do those in the classroom, a role so prominent in other European universities—is mitigated by a strong populist ideology among Finnish university academics. Although intellectuals partook in the development of a national identity in Finland at the beginning of the century, the "decentering" of Finland and other European countries at the end of the century leaves both private and public intellectuals at a loss for what to do. Vilamaa expresses it well: "public intellectuals are not able to create

national visions, and private intellectuals are not motivated to try.”

Missing from the different cases is any discussion of the exchanges between universities and the international “invisible” university structures that have evolved. What role do educational travelers, Fulbright scholars, international graduate training programs, and powerful authors such as Paulo Friere play in the way that higher education institutions evolve in different countries? How do connections between countries, real connections that result in concrete educational practices and cultures, create organizational cultures of dependency, resistance, or isolation? But even given this, the book would be very useful in a course on comparative higher education. The cases invite discussion, and each provides the starting point for projects and comparisons, especially within the theoretical framework suggested in the introductory chapter.—*Allan F. Burns, University of Florida, Gainesville*

Manguel, Alberto. *A History of Reading.* New York: Viking Penguin, 1996. 372p. \$26.95 alk. paper. ISBN 0-670-84302-4. LC 96-2703.

It probably is not too soon for the ALA to begin preparing a dossier on Manguel in support of his canonization as patron saint of reading. In the meantime, free life membership in the association would be appropriate. Alberto Manguel is one of those rare individuals of today: learned, urbane, self-aware, democratic, and generous. And he is passionately committed to readers (whoever, wherever), reading (whatever, however), and books (never met one he did not like). If, as a librarian and a reader, you are feeling a bit lonely in this, the twilight of the book, take heart: here is someone you should meet. Manguel will lead you on a delightfully idiosyncratic tour of his world—a world crowded with readers and crammed with books.

At the end of his tour, he comments: “Among the books I haven’t written—among the books I haven’t read but would like to read—is *The History of Reading*.” No, this is not *the* history of reading; it is not even history in any recognizable sense. Rather, it is a series of Montaigne-like essays on aspects of reading that draw on the author’s own reading and experiences. Like Montaigne’s classic, *A History of Reading* is deliberately autobiographical. It is the story of the author’s reading. For Manguel, we are what we read: “The association of books with their readers is unlike any other between objects and their users. . . . Books inflict upon their readers a symbolism far more complex than that of a simple utensil.” Manguel is the dinner guest who spends the evening scanning the spines of your books and accumulating observations about their owner, just as he wants his readers to do.

A noted writer—as well as noted reader—Manguel probably is not our “common reader.” He read Kipling and Stevenson to the blind Borges after school in Buenos Aires; he attended secondary school in France at a *lycée* outside Strasbourg where Wimpfeling and Beatus Rhenanus went to school; and he has his heroes—Augustine, Whitman, Proust, among other heavyweights. He is fluent in several foreign languages and even cites Hildegard of Bingen from Migne. He is as comfortable with the classics as he is with contemporary literary criticism. His cultural formation is broad.

A History of Reading is Manguel’s own curiosity cabinet of specimens of reading culled from literature and history, a capacious room strewn with examples of any and every type of reading experience one could imagine. It is non-narrational and defies easy summary. It moves deftly back and forth from Mesopotamia to the present, and considers such topics as reading aloud, si-