



Project
MUSE[®]
Scholarly journals online

and exposition. Patricia Fortini Brown (on Renaissance Venice) explores housing typologies, charity, and approaches to the housing of minority groups. Mary Elizabeth Perry (on sixteenth-century Spain) uses law and physical evidence to examine the ways in which the closed-off house might constitute a “site of resistance” for Jews forced to convert to Christianity (70). Sabine MacCormack (on early modern Spain and Peru) uses legal and literary sources to chart starkly contrasting attitudes and policies toward the poor and the conquered. William Ian Miller (on medieval Iceland) works from legal codes and poetry to look at the fiercely held, often (to the modern reader) exotic beliefs regarding the home in the “Middle of Nowhere.” The poetry and archaeology that inform Nicholas Howe’s essay on Anglo-Saxon England seem to suggest a less passionate sense of place than had the Icelanders; in compensation, the Anglo-Saxons offer a language rich in meanings.

Throughout, as is characteristic of recent scholarship, considerable attention is paid to out-groups—Jews, Moriscos, immigrants, the dispossessed, and criminals. The book even pays attention to the meanings of home and homelessness beyond the purely human realm, treating spirits, ghosts, and other ethereal dwellers (Miller), as well as the Christian contrast between the heavenly home and the transient earthly existence (Howe). Adding to the variety and attraction of the collection, the essays differ greatly in their poignance. Fortini Brown and Perry are largely concerned with the physical dwelling; MacCormack, with the absence of fixed habitation; and Miller and Howe, with ideologies. Most of the contributions respect traditional norms of narrative and documentation, but Miller’s offers postmodernist virtuosity (the presence of Wayne Gretsky, the hockey player, was both fun and telling). This book is a fine microcosm of contemporary studies.

James S. Grubb
University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University. By William Clark (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2006) 662 pp. \$45.00

Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University is a brilliantly conceived and astonishingly erudite book. Clark deploys two large sociological concepts—charisma and cameralism—to frame the path from the late medieval university to the emergence of the German research university. He looks closely at change in material practices or, one might otherwise say, the everyday practices of university life, to tease out the pattern of change over a long period of time. One cannot but notice the early emergence of both defining characteristics and odd ticks of the contemporary academy. Because neither of Clark’s controlling concepts is sharply defined, however, the strong logic underlying the project is too often lost in a mass of details. It could have been a much better and

shorter book had Clark exercised more rigor in blending historical materials and social theory and more discipline in the writing. It would also have benefited from less abstract language and jargon. The significance of the seminar, one of the key developments that he tracks, is phrased thus: “The German research seminar was an institutionalized technique for the formation of normalized but individualized academic personae” (181).

In short, this book is heavy going, but it is also rewarding. In great detail, Clark shows a series of cumulatively transformative shifts. Broadly speaking, he describes the evolution of a medieval juridical/ecclesiastical institution to a modern political-economic one. As this terminology suggests, he integrates the emergence of the modern university into the story of capitalism (or the particular quasi-administered form denoted “cameralism”) and bureaucratization. Moreover, “like modern capitalism,” he writes, “the research university” cultivated “charismatic figures within a broader sphere of rationalization” (14). More particularly, he shows how examinations evolved from disputation to more informal and spontaneous (compared to medieval, not to our, standards) intellectual exchange, how academic communication moved from orality to writing and ultimately to dissertations, and how formal grading and ranking (responding, in his view, to bureaucratic imperative) came to shape academic life. He also examines at chapter length changes in or the emergence of the lecture catalog, disputation, examinations, the seminar, the Ph.D., the appointment of professors, and the library catalog.

One of the particular strengths of the book derives from the comparisons that Clark makes between the Protestant German system; the English “collegiate” system, which did not evolve into the research university until the twentieth century; and the Jesuit system, which remains collegiate but achieves a meritocratic and bureaucratic efficiency not matched by either of the other two. These comparisons usefully complicate the absolute linearity in too many traditional to modern stories. Since Clark does not propose total transformation, the modern university seems to carry some of its past. It is not wholly modernized or routinized; it is a mixed institution, making it (fortunately) impossible to manage fully, whether by market mechanisms or bureaucracy.

Though a long book, there are many things that Clark declines to address, at some cost. For all of his theoretical sophistication, he seems not interested in theories of causal explanation; the account is descriptive—and richly so—with little attention to the why question. Not unrelated, the story is entirely internal. The social, political, or intellectual contexts beyond the university and state educational bureaucracy do not find a place in this story.

The book raises a final question about method that other books have raised as well. In the past few years, several major interdisciplinary books have dealt with the development in of new genres (novel) or the production of knowledge (natural and social) in the early modern period. Though obviously historical, they are not works of card-carrying

historians; they are in a broad sense historical sociology. The strength in all cases is a powerful theoretical idea, with questions more inventive than those asked by narrative historians. The weakness is the proliferation of facts, stories, episodes too many of which are not—or cannot be—effectively deployed to enrich or verify the theoretical framing. The problem is not the lack of relevant evidence, but rather that its indiscriminate proliferation makes tying it to theory too complex to carry out. Oddly, historians turn out to be more parsimonious than the social scientists. Although historians might do well with more theoretical ambition, historical sociologists might use more self-restraint and rigor to develop a narrative strategy that can strengthen their theoretical claims.

Thomas Bender
New York University

Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe. By Peter Burke (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2004) 210 pp. \$70.00 cloth \$24.99 paper

Continuing to encourage more scholarly interaction between history and linguistics, Burke has recently explored the dynamic relationship between language and community in the early modern world. He argues that historians should pay more attention to language because it is a powerful and sensitive indicator of cultural change. He considers linguistic developments in various European communities between the rise of print culture and the French Revolution. His series of linked essays—originally presented as lectures—demonstrates how Europe transformed from a medieval system of nonclassical Latin and regional spoken dialects to one of national, written vernaculars by 1750. Burke seeks to debunk any generalizing narratives of linear progress or decline, such as the “rise of vernaculars” or the triumph of French. Instead, he argues for “the constant conflict between centripetal and centrifugal forces, convergence and divergence, assimilation and resistance, discipline and freedom, unity and diversity” in the history of language (13).

Burke begins by demonstrating how, amidst the persistence of Latin, which bound together various communities, such as the Catholic church and the humanist “Republic of Letters,” early modern Europeans began to find merit in the vernacular. This development resulted in “competitions” between various vernaculars as legitimate rivals to Latin or Greek and the slow infiltration of vernaculars into academic and political life. In these battles, some languages and dialects, such as French, became internationally prominent; whereas others such as Occitan and Breton declined. Despite the standardization of vernaculars—encouraged by the development of language academies, dictionaries, and grammars—contacts between languages naturally encouraged linguistic borrowing—for instance, the entrance of African, Arabic, and