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***Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University.* By William Clark. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press. 2007 (first published 2006). 668 pp. \$22.50/£13 (paperback).**

William Clark offers a new take on the much-studied history of universities. His focus is on the German universities in which the notion developed that the central purpose of a university was research (a famous formulation by Wilhelm von Humboldt is quoted on p. 445); Oxford and Cambridge, which accepted this idea only slowly and reluctantly, serve as foils. Part of Clark's new approach consists in telling the story of universities as a struggle between two of Max Weber's types of authority: charismatic and rational. Academics cultivate charisma by insisting on their professorial dignity and by gathering admirers of their lecturing and their research achievements. Bureaucrats constantly try to regulate academics by defining and enforcing their duties and requiring them to report on their own work and that of their students. This familiar conflict has been enacted many times over the centuries, especially in the German states, where civil servants intent on *Polizey* intervened to ensure that professors gave their lectures on time and got through the syllabus.

The other novelty of Clark's book is his close attention to the central institutions of academic life and to their changes down the centuries. Successive chapters discuss the lecture-list, the lecture and the disputation, the written examination, the seminar, the doctorate, the appointment of a professor, and the library catalogue. Wherever possible he uses contemporary accounts and, above all, illustrations, to reconstruct what actually happened. A picture of a lecture given in Bologna in 1380, or the account of Dorothea Schlözer's PhD viva at Göttingen in 1787, can reveal much about the texture of academic experience. The rich detail requires Clark's book to be read slowly and savoured. His style is occasionally awkward, with Germanicisms ('dispose over'; 'fail' in the sense of *fehlen*; 'acts' meaning *Akten*), but on the whole fresh and arresting, and much of the book is actually fun to read.

Late eighteenth-century Göttingen emerges as pivotal in the development of universities, and its key figure was the classicist Christian Gottlob Heyne, who founded the crucial institution of the research seminar. The seminar promoted disciplinary specialization and helped destroy the earlier practice by which professors, supposedly qualified as masters of numerous disciplines, increased their salaries by moving to chairs in different subjects. The seminar also placed personal charisma at the centre of teaching. Heyne ran his from 1763 to 1812, by which time he was too old to do it properly (but obviously felt, like kings and popes, that his job could end only with death). Over the same period Heyne directed the University Library, which by 1800 was the largest academic (as opposed to princely) library in the world, with 200,000 volumes. He combined the systematic catalogues with author catalogues. To assist in selecting books for the library, he edited from 1770 the *Göttinger gelehrten Anzeigen*, in which members of the University reviewed and recommended new books.

Since Göttingen was a new university, founded in 1737, ministers had considerable freedom in shaping it, and they introduced another far-reaching innovation: the appointment of professors on the basis of specialist expertise attested by publication. This was part of several long-term trends that Clark recounts. It illustrates the supersession of oral by written performances in academic life, a process seen especially in examinations, as the oral exam was gradually supplemented by the *Klausur* or written paper. It was crucial to the commodification of academia, something noted approvingly in 1760 by the camerist Johann Heinrich von Justi: 'In the Republic of Letters, the academic ware is publicly vended for money', by which, anticipating Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, he meant 'a sort of coin called "fame"' (p. 373). It also illustrates a major theme of Clark's book: how very far the character of modern academia results from bureaucratic regulation, and how much of this regulation is salutary. There is ample evidence here for academics' inclination to nepotism, idleness and quarrelling. Opinion may differ, however, on whether bureaucratic intervention or market forces provide the better antidote.

So far, so excellent. Unfortunately, Clark's book is too long. Part 2, headed 'Narrative, Conversation, Reputation: On the Ineluctability of the Voice and the Oral', really forms a separate and inferior book. It should have been extracted (shortening this one by a hundred pages), revised, expanded, and published separately. Its theme is that despite the modern predominance of the written over the oral, speech remains important in academia, in teaching and above all in gossip, which can help to make or break reputations. Much time is spent analysing reports of official visitations of universities, showing how bureaucrats convert oral information into a separate, written reality. These reports are studied as written texts, with help from Erich Auerbach and Hayden White—a worthwhile exercise, but with limited returns. The epilogue, with another awkward gear-change, hastily surveys the history of the research university in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although it touches on Victorian Oxford, it strangely fails to mention Mark Pattison and his role in promoting German-style research there.

But enough carping. Three-quarters of this book is exceptionally worth reading. It is based on many years of arduous research, largely in Berlin. For most of us, reading academic paperwork is bad enough, the idea of studying it sounds unbearable; but Clark shares with Anthony Grafton (who provides an admiring blurb) a talent for finding life and illumination in texts that would otherwise seem dead and repugnant. His book is also valuable in defamiliarizing academic institutions (the written exam, the doctoral dissertation, the reference letter) that we too readily take for granted. If the Data Protection Act permitted, a study of the academic reference as a literary genre would be valuable, and Clark would be the right person to do it.

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